

ANNOUNCER: FUNDING FOR  
"COUNTRY MUSIC" WAS PROVIDED

BY THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS

OF THE BETTER ANGELS SOCIETY:

THE BLAVATNIK FAMILY FOUNDATION,  
THE SCHWARTZ/REISMAN FOUNDATION,  
THE PFEIL FOUNDATION,

DIANE AND HAL BRIERLEY,  
JOHN AND CATHERINE DEBS,

THE FULLERTON FAMILY  
CHARITABLE FUND,

BY THE PERRY AND DONNA  
GOLKIN FAMILY FOUNDATION,

JAY ALIX AND UNA JACKMAN,

MERCEDES T. BASS,

AND FRED AND DONNA SEIGEL

AND BY THESE ADDITIONAL MEMBERS.

[BOB WILLIS AND HIS TEXAS  
PLAYBOYS' "NEW SAN ANTONIO  
ROSE" PLAYING]

WILLIS:  
OH, TEAR IT DOWN, MR. MAN.

TEAR IT DOWN NOW.

MAJOR FUNDING WAS PROVIDED  
BY: THE ANNENBERG FOUNDATION;

BY THE ARTHUR VINING DAVIS  
FOUNDATIONS,

DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING  
AMERICA'S FUTURE

THROUGH EDUCATION;

BY BELMONT UNIVERSITY,  
WHERE STUDENTS CAN STUDY

MUSIC AND MUSIC BUSINESS  
IN THE HEART OF MUSIC CITY;

BY THE SOUNDTRACK OF AMERICA--  
MADE IN TENNESSEE--

TRAVEL INFORMATION  
AT TNVACATION.COM;

BY THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT  
OF NASHVILLE

AND DAVIDSON COUNTY;

BY ROSALIND P. WALTER;

BY THE CORPORATION  
FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING;

AND BY VIEWERS LIKE YOU.

THANK YOU.

â€”a HEADING DOWN SOUTH  
TO THE LAND OF THE PINE â€”a

â€”a THUMBING MY WAY INTO  
NORTH CAROLINE â€”a

â€”a STARING UP THE ROAD,  
PRAY TO GOD I SEE HEADLIGHTS â€”a

â€”a SO, ROCK ME, MAMA,  
LIKE A WAGON WHEEL â€”a

â€”a ROCK ME, MAMA,  
ANY WAY YOU FEEL â€”a

â€”a HEY, MAMA, ROCK ME

[CHEERING AND APPLAUSE]

JOHNNY CASH: â€”a THEY GAVE HIM  
HIS ORDERS â€”a

â€”a AT MONROE, VIRGINIA

â€”a SAID, "STEVE,  
YOU'RE WAY BEHIND TIME â€”a

â€”a "THIS IS NOT 38,  
THIS IS OL' 97 â€”a

â€”a PUT HER INTO  
SPENCER ON TIME"... â€”a

MAN: WHEN I WAS GROWING UP  
ON ROUTE 8, KOSCIUSKO ROAD,

IN PHILADELPHIA, MISSISSIPPI,

THE GULF, MOBILE, AND OHIO  
RAN RIGHT BEHIND OUR HOUSE.

AND IT SOUNDED LIKE THE TRAIN  
WAS COMING THROUGH MY BEDROOM

AT NIGHT AND I LOVED IT.

CASH:  
"WATCH OL' 97 ROLL"

AND I USED TO DREAM ABOUT  
GETTING ON THAT TRAIN

AND RIDING AND JUST GOING TO...

I DIDN'T WANT  
TO GO TO NEW YORK,

I DIDN'T WANT  
TO GO TO HOLLYWOOD,

I WANTED TO GO TO NASHVILLE  
AND PLAY THAT KIND OF MUSIC

THAT TOUCHED MY HEART.

CASH: "IN THE WRECK  
WITH HIS HAND ON THE THROTTLE"

"SCALDED TO DEATH  
BY THE STEAM"

[TRAIN'S WHISTLE BLOWS]

[MANDOLIN PLAYING]

NARRATOR: FROM THE TIME  
HE WAS A LITTLE BOY,

GROWING UP IN MISSISSIPPI  
IN THE 1960s,

MUSIC WAS A CENTRAL PART  
OF MARTY STUART'S LIFE.

HIS MOTHER HAD NAMED HIM AFTER

HER FAVORITE COUNTRY SINGER,  
MARTY ROBBINS,

AND GAVE HIM A COWBOY GUITAR  
WHEN HE WAS ONLY 3.

BY AGE 9, HE HAD  
MASTERED THE INSTRUMENT

AND PERFORMED  
WHEREVER HE COULD.

THE FIRST RECORD  
YOUNG STUART EVER OWNED

WAS BY HIS MUSICAL HERO  
JOHNNY CASH.

AFTER MEETING COUNTRY STAR  
CONNIE SMITH

AT THE LOCAL FAIRGROUNDS  
WHEN HE WAS 11,

HE VOWED TO HIS MAMA THAT  
HE WOULD MARRY HER SOMEDAY.

AT A DIFFERENT CONCERT,  
BILL MONROE IGNITED A PASSION

FOR BLUEGRASS MUSIC  
AND THE MANDOLIN.

STUART: AND HE GAVE ME  
HIS MANDOLIN PICK.

HE SAID, "DO YOU WANT TO PLAY  
THE MANDOLIN, BOY?"

I SAID, "YES, SIR,  
JUST LIKE YOU."

HE SAID, "THIS RIGHT HERE  
WILL HELP YOU OUT."

AND I CARRIED THAT PICK  
TO SCHOOL WITH ME EVERY DAY

LIKE IT WAS KRYPTONITE  
IN MY POCKET, OR SOMETHING.

I FELT SPECIAL BECAUSE  
I HAD SOMETHING IN MY POCKET

THAT NOBODY ELSE HAD  
AND NOBODY ELSE KNEW ABOUT.

NARRATOR: STUART WAS SOON  
GOOD ENOUGH ON THE MANDOLIN

TO IMPRESS A MEMBER OF  
LESTER FLATT'S BLUEGRASS BAND,

WHO SUGGESTED THAT SOMEDAY  
THE BOY MIGHT TRAVEL WITH THEM.

THE CHANCE CAME IN 1972,  
WHEN HE WAS 13.

HE GOT PERMISSION FROM HIS  
PARENTS TO GO TO NASHVILLE

AND TRY OUT FOR  
LESTER FLATT'S BAND.

THE ONLY DISAPPOINTMENT  
WAS THAT HE HAD TO TAKE

A BUS, NOT THE TRAIN.

IT DROPPED HIM OFF IN DECAYING  
DOWNTOWN NASHVILLE,

NOT FAR FROM  
THE RYMAN AUDITORIUM,

AT TWO IN THE MORNING.

STUART: 2:00 IN THE MORNING,  
ON ANY NIGHT, AROUND THE RYMAN

BACK IN THOSE DAYS  
WAS NOT THE PLACE TO BE.

I WALKED AROUND THE CORNER  
OF THE GREYHOUND STATION

AND THERE WAS  
THE RYMAN AUDITORIUM.

THE BUILDING THAT  
I KNEW SO MUCH ABOUT.

AND IT WAS TIRED  
AND IT WAS WEARY.

THE PAINT WAS CRACKED AND SOME  
OF THE WINDOWS WERE OUT,

BUT IT LOOKED BEAUTIFUL TO ME.

[MANDOLIN PLAYING]

NARRATOR: WITHIN A WEEK,  
LESTER FLATT BROUGHT HIM ALONG

TO PERFORM AT  
THE GRAND OLE OPRY.

STUART: WALKING INTO  
THE GRAND OLE OPRY

WITH LESTER FLATT  
TOTING HIS GUITAR WAS LIKE

WALKING INTO THE VATICAN  
WITH THE POPE.

IT WAS A BIG MOMENT.

IT WAS LIKE THAT OLD SCENE  
IN THE "WIZARD OF OZ"

WHERE THE WORLD WENT FROM  
BLACK AND WHITE TO COLOR.

THAT'S WHAT IT WAS LIKE FOR ME.

EVERYTHING I'D EVER  
DREAMED OF CAME TRUE

WHEN I WAS 13 YEARS OLD.

[MANDOLIN PLAYING]

AND I PLAYED THE MANDOLIN,  
AND I WAS SO LITTLE,

I HAD TO HOLD THE MANDOLIN  
WAY UP IN THE AIR

LIKE I WAS SHOOTING BIRDS,  
OR SOMETHING.

AT THE END OF THE SONG,  
THE CROWD JUST KEPT APPLAUDING

AND APPLAUDING AND APPLAUDING,

AND I THOUGHT I HAD  
DONE SOMETHING WRONG,

AND I LOOKED AT LESTER  
AND I SAID, "WHAT DO I DO?"

HE SAID, "DO IT AGAIN."

AND I KNEW I HAD FOUND A HOME.

AND I KNEW I WAS  
WHERE I BELONGED

AND I WAS WHERE I WANTED TO BE.

MEN: "WHAT WOULD YOU GIVE

" IN EXCHANGE FOR YOUR SOUL?"

[CROWD CHEERING]

â

HANK WILLIAMS JR.:  
â AS LONG AS I CAN

â KEEP A LOT OF FRIENDS  
AROUND ME â

MAN: I THINK THERE'S A PARADOX

THAT'S ALWAYS EXISTED  
IN COUNTRY MUSIC.

HOW MUCH CHANGE DO YOU EMBRACE?

AND HOW MUCH CHANGE CAN YOU MAKE  
WITHOUT COMPLETELY OBLITERATING

WHAT YOU WERE  
AND WHERE YOU CAME FROM?

MAN 2: I DON'T LIKE FENCES  
BUILT AROUND MUSIC.

'CAUSE FENCES,  
SURE, THEY...

THEY KEEP THINGS OUT,  
BUT THEY ALSO, UH,

THEY DON'T LET THINGS IN.

WILLIAMS JR.: â ...STONED  
AT THE JUKEBOX... â

MAN: I THINK THE LINES  
ARE ONLY IMAGINARY AND THAT

YOU HAVE TO PUT THEM  
THERE BECAUSE

THEY'RE NOT THERE  
IN THE BEGINNING.

IT'S MUSIC, YOU KNOW?

YOU CAN'T SAY IT'S  
THIS, THAT, OR THE OTHER.

IT'S NOT A DEMOCRAT  
OR REPUBLICAN. [LAUGHS]

NARRATOR: FROM ITS BEGINNINGS,  
COUNTRY MUSIC

HAD NEVER BEEN ONE STYLE.

LIKE ALL ART FORMS,  
IT HAD ALWAYS RESISTED

BEING CONFINED WITHIN  
ARBITRARY BORDERS.

AND LIKE ALL ARTISTS,  
ITS BIGGEST STARS

HAD ALWAYS PUSHED THOSE  
BOUNDARIES TO THEIR LIMITS.

WILLIAMS JR.: "AND LORD, I LOVE  
THAT HURTIN' MUSIC "

" 'CAUSE I AM HURTIN', TOO

MALONE: AS FANS, WE MAY WANT  
THEM TO DO THE OLD STUFF.

WE'RE UNHAPPY  
QUITE OFTEN WHEN THEY--

WHEN THEY BRANCH OUT  
INTO SOMETHING NEW.

BUT MUSICIANS,  
THEY'RE INNOVATIVE.

THEY'RE EXPERIMENTAL.

THEY WANT TO DO  
SOMETHING FRESH, SOMETHING NEW.

OF COURSE, THE QUESTION IS  
WHERE DOES IT END?

WHEN DOES IT CEASE  
TO BE COUNTRY

WHEN THEY'VE MADE  
ALL THESE CHANGES?

"

WAYLON JENNINGS: " LORD,  
IT'S THE SAME OLD TUNE "

" FIDDLE AND GUITAR

" WHERE DO WE  
TAKE IT FROM HERE? "

" RHINESTONE SUITS  
AND NEW SHINY CARS "



â IT'S BEEN THE SAME WAY  
FOR YEARS â

â WE NEED A CHANGE

NARRATOR: IN THE 1970s,  
DEFINING COUNTRY MUSIC

WOULD BE DEBATED  
AS NEVER BEFORE.

BUT THAT ARGUMENT WOULD SPARK  
ONE OF ITS MOST VIBRANT ERAS--

MAKING ROOM FOR NEW VOICES  
AND NEW ATTITUDES.

AND OUT ON THE EDGES,

WHERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MUSIC  
MEET AND MINGLE

AND ART IS ALWAYS CREATED,

COUNTRY MUSIC WOULD FIND  
A DRAMATICALLY LARGER AUDIENCE.

JENNINGS: â I DON'T THINK HANK  
DONE IT THIS WAY â

NARRATOR: TWO WOMEN

FROM NEARLY  
OPPOSITE BACKGROUNDS

WOULD LEAD THE WAY.

ONE WOULD COME INTO HER OWN  
AS A WRITER AND SINGER OF SONGS

DRAWN FROM HER  
IMPOVERISHED CHILDHOOD

IN THE MOUNTAINS  
OF EAST TENNESSEE.

THE OTHER, FROM THE FOLK CLUBS  
OF THE EAST COAST,

WOULD BECOME AN UNLIKELY  
CONVERT TO COUNTRY MUSIC--

AND, WITH HER ANGELIC VOICE,  
CONVERT MILLIONS MORE.

TWO MUSICAL OUTCASTS  
WOULD MAKE THEIR OWN RULES

ABOUT WHAT IS  
AND WHAT ISN'T COUNTRY MUSIC.

ONE WOULD HAVE  
TO LEAVE NASHVILLE

TO FIND HIS  
TRUE VOICE IN TEXAS.

THE OTHER WOULD UPEND  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN

ARTISTS AND THEIR RECORD LABELS  
IN MUSIC CITY.

A MARRIED COUPLE, EACH  
POSSESSING A REMARKABLE VOICE,

WOULD CREATE SOME OF COUNTRY  
MUSIC'S MOST ENDURING RECORDS

WHILE SEEMINGLY LIVING OUT  
THEIR SONGS' TRAGIC LYRICS.

AND, AS A NEW GENERATION  
OF ARTISTS CAME OF AGE,

TWO CHILDREN OF  
TWO MUSIC LEGENDS--

ONE, THE SON OF  
THE HILLBILLY SHAKESPEARE,

THE OTHER, THE DAUGHTER  
OF THE MAN IN BLACK--

WOULD STRIKE OUT ON THEIR OWN

AND PROVE,  
AS THEIR FATHERS DID,

THAT COUNTRY MUSIC,  
THOUGH GROUNDED IN TRADITION,

HAS ALWAYS BEEN MOVING FORWARD.

â

â

TOM T. HALL: â COUNTRY IS

â SITTIN' ON THE BACK PORCH

â LISTEN TO THE WHIPPOORWILLS

â LATE IN THE DAY

NARRATOR: BY THE TIME  
YOUNG MARTY STUART

DEBUTED ON THE GRAND OLE OPRY,

THE DECISION HAD ALREADY BEEN  
MADE THAT THE RYMAN AUDITORIUM

WAS NO LONGER SUITED  
FOR AN ATTRACTION DRAWING

400,000 VISITORS A YEAR.

THE FORMER TABERNACLE,  
OWNED BY

THE NATIONAL LIFE AND ACCIDENT  
INSURANCE COMPANY,

WAS NOW MORE THAN  
3/4 OF A CENTURY OLD.

HALL: â KNOWIN' YOUR KIND

MAN: AND THE STREET  
AROUND THE RYMAN AUDITORIUM

AT THAT TIME WAS  
FULL OF HONKY-TONKS

AND STREET WALKERS AND BEGGARS,

AND THE FANS, THEY WERE  
ALL GETTING HIT OUT THERE

WHILE THEY'RE WAITING IN LINE  
TO HOPEFULLY GET A TICKET.

AND THE INSURANCE COMPANY GOT  
VERY SENSITIVE AS TIME WENT ON.

AND IT WAS A--IT WAS  
REALLY A PR PROBLEM.

HALL: â COUNTRY IS

NARRATOR: FOR YEARS,  
OPRY MANAGER BUD WENDELL

HAD BEEN FIELDING COMPLAINTS  
FROM THE PERFORMERS

ABOUT THEIR CRAMPED  
WORKING CONDITIONS.

"MOST OF MY MEMORIES  
OF THE RYMAN," ROY ACUFF SAID,

"ARE OF MISERY, SWEATING  
OUT THERE ON THE STAGE,

THE AUDIENCE SUFFERING, TOO."

HALL: "I FIND OUT WHAT'S RIGHT

NARRATOR:  
SUMMERS WERE THE WORST, WHEN

TEMPERATURES INSIDE  
THE UN-AIR-CONDITIONED

BRICK BUILDING ROSE TO  
100 DEGREES AND HIGHER.

STUART: AND LESTER FLATT  
WENT TO BUD WENDELL AND SAID,

"BUD, WE'VE TALKED ABOUT IT  
AMONGST OURSELVES

"AND WHY DON'T SOME OF  
US OLDER ARTISTS

"GO IN AND PITCH IN  
AND MAYBE COME UP WITH

"AN AIR-CONDITIONING SYSTEM,  
OR SOMETHING TO HELP OUT

AROUND HERE A LITTLE BIT?"

BUD SAID SOMETHING TO  
THE EFFECT, I THINK, "UH, WELL,

"WE'VE CHECKED  
INTO THAT, LESTER,

AND IT'S A LITTLE OVER  
\$2 MILLION."

AND LESTER SAID,  
"AIN'T AS HOT AS I THOUGHT."

[LAUGHS]

NARRATOR: WENDELL'S BOSSES  
DECIDED THE BEST SOLUTION

WAS TO BUILD A NEW HOME  
FOR THE OPRY.

ON MORE THAN 300 ACRES OF LAND,

6 MILES UP THE CUMBERLAND RIVER  
FROM DOWNTOWN,

THEY SPENT MORE THAN  
\$65 MILLION

TO BUILD AN ELABORATE  
THEME PARK, OPRYLAND USA;

A SPRAWLING, 615-ROOM HOTEL;

AND THE SPACIOUS  
GRAND OLE OPRY HOUSE,

FULLY AIR-CONDITIONED,

WITH COMFORTABLE SEATING  
FOR 4,400 PEOPLE,

12 DRESSING ROOMS  
FOR THE ARTISTS,

AND A SEPARATE,  
STATE-OF-THE-ART

TELEVISION STUDIO.

EVERYTHING WAS BRAND-NEW,  
EXCEPT FOR A CIRCLE OF OLD WOOD

AT THE CENTER OF THE STAGE.

IT HAD COME FROM THE RYMAN.

ON FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 1974,

THE MOTHER CHURCH  
OF COUNTRY MUSIC

HOSTED ITS FINAL  
GRAND OLE OPRY.

MAN: â€œa GOOD-BYE,  
DEAR, OLD RYMAN â€œa

ANDERSON: I'LL NEVER FORGET  
THE LAST NIGHT AT THE RYMAN.

IT WAS ON A FRIDAY NIGHT.

AND WE WERE GOING TO OPEN  
AT THE OPRY HOUSE

THE NEXT NIGHT, ON SATURDAY.

THERE WAS A FEELING THERE OF,

UM, IT WAS LIKE A FEELING

I'VE NEVER FELT  
AT THE OPRY BEFORE.

IT WAS A LITTLE BIT OF SADNESS,  
A LOT OF SADNESS.

IT WAS A LITTLE BIT OF JOY.

THERE WAS ANTICIPATION.

THERE WAS A FEAR  
OF THE UNKNOWN.

"WELL, WHERE DO  
WE GO FROM HERE?

"ARE WE CUTTING OFF OUR NOSE  
TO SPITE OUR FACE HERE?

IS THIS REALLY WHAT  
WE OUGHT TO BE DOING?"

NARRATOR: BILL ANDERSON SANG  
HIS BIG HIT, "PO' FOLKS."

ROY ACUFF DID  
"WABASH CANNONBALL "

BEFORE INTRODUCING HIS  
OLD FRIEND MINNIE PEARL.

AFTER 8 HALF-HOUR SEGMENTS  
OF THE OPRY,

THE GRAND OLE GOSPEL SHOW  
TOOK OVER.

HANK SNOW WAS A FEATURED GUEST,

AS WERE MOTHER MAYBELLE CARTER  
AND HER DAUGHTERS

AND JOHNNY CASH.

THE LAST SONG PERFORMED  
LATE THAT EVENING

WAS THE OLD  
CARTER FAMILY CLASSIC,

"WILL THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN."

LISTENING TO IT ALL  
WAS A YOUNG REPORTER

FOR "THE NEW YORKER" MAGAZINE,  
WHO HAD COME TO THE RYMAN  
TO COVER THE EVENT.

GARRISON KEILLOR HAD GROWN UP  
IN MINNESOTA, 860 MILES AWAY,

GLUED TO HIS FAMILY RADIO  
EVERY SATURDAY NIGHT

TO HEAR THE MUSIC  
AND MINNIE PEARL'S STORIES

FROM THE MAKE-BELIEVE TOWN  
OF GRINDER'S SWITCH.

ON THIS NIGHT,  
KEILLOR WORKED HIS WAY

INTO THE BROADCAST  
ENGINEERS' BOOTH,

LEANED AGAINST THE BACK WALL,  
AND CLOSED HIS EYES.

"IT WAS GOOD," HE WROTE,  
"TO LET THE OPRY GO OUT

"THE SAME WAY  
IT HAD FIRST COME TO ME,

THROUGH THE AIR IN THE DARK."

THE NEXT NIGHT,  
THE GRAND OLE OPRY DEBUTED

FROM ITS BRAND-NEW HOME  
IN THE SUBURBS.

â FROM THE GREAT ATLANTIC OCEAN  
TO THE WIDE PACIFIC SHORE... â

ANDERSON: I GET GOOSE BUMPS  
EVEN THINKING ABOUT IT NOW,

AS THEY PROJECTED A FILM  
OF ROY ACUFF SINGING

"THE WABASH CANNONBALL"  
FROM BACK IN THE FORTIES.

AND THEY'RE SHOWING THIS  
ON THE SCREEN

IN THE NEW OPRY HOUSE.

â€” ...ON THE WABASH  
CANNONBALL â€”

ANDERSON: AND IT'S JUST QUIET  
AS A MOUSE AND ALL OF A SUDDEN,

THAT SCREEN BEGINS TO LIFT  
AND THERE'S ROY ACUFF...

â€” ...ST. LOUIS  
AND CHICAGO  
BY THE WAY â€”

â€” FROM THE HILLS  
OF MINNESOTA â€”

â€” WHERE THE RIPPLING  
WATERS FALL... â€”

AND THEY'RE SINGING  
THE SAME SONG.

IT NEVER MISSED A BEAT.

IT WAS FROM THE OLD FILM  
IN THE FORTIES

TO HERE'S ROY ACUFF  
NOW IN HIS SEVENTIES

STILL SINGING  
"THE WABASH CANNONBALL."

I STOOD THERE AND CRIED.

I'M ALMOST...I CAN  
ALMOST SIT HERE

AND CRY JUST THINKING ABOUT IT.

NARRATOR: THE GUEST OF HONOR  
THAT NIGHT

WAS PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON.

IN WASHINGTON,  
HE WAS EMBROILED IN

THE WATERGATE SCANDAL  
AND IMPEACHMENT PROCEEDINGS.

IN NASHVILLE, HE WAS HAPPY  
TO FIND A FRIENDLY AUDIENCE.

FOR YEARS, THE COUNTRY  
MUSIC ASSOCIATION



HAD BEEN TELLING  
ADVERTISING EXECUTIVES

AND RADIO STATION OWNERS

THAT THE OLD STEREOTYPE  
OF COUNTRY FANS

AS POOR AND UNEDUCATED  
HILLBILLIES WAS WRONG.

"THE FANS OF OUR MUSIC,"  
A CMA OFFICIAL SAID,

"ELECT THE PRESIDENTS,  
RUN THE FACTORIES,

"GROW THE FOOD, TRANSPORT  
OUR GOODS, AND, IN GENERAL,

MANIPULATE THE GEARS OF THIS  
COUNTRY EVERY DAY."

"THE "C" IN COUNTRY MUSIC,"  
A BROCHURE ADDED, "MEANS CASH."

WHOO! GET UP THERE.

âa WELL, GOOD MORNING,  
CAPTAIN âa

NARRATOR: BY 1974, DOLLY PARTON  
HAD BEEN PERFORMING

ON PORTER WAGONER'S SYNDICATED  
TELEVISION SHOW FOR 7 YEARS.

AND DURING ALL 7 OF THEM,

WAGONER HAD EXERTED  
TIGHT CONTROL OVER HER CAREER.

âa DOWN ON YOUR  
NEW MUD RUN?  
HEY, HEY, YEAH âa

NARRATOR: WAGONER'S OWN STAR AS  
A COUNTRY SINGER WAS FADING.

HIS DUET ALBUMS WITH PARTON  
OUTSOLD HIS OWN SOLO RECORDS,

BUT ON THE ROAD  
AND IN THE STUDIO,

HE INSISTED ON BEING IN CHARGE.

"I SIGNED THE CHECKS," HE SAID,  
"SO, WE DID THINGS MY WAY."

â FROM DOWN OLD  
TENNESSEE WAY,  
HEY, HEY â

â I COME  
FROM TENNESSEE â

NARRATOR: WITH  
WAGONER PRODUCING, SHE RECORDED

THE OLD JIMMIE RODGERS TUNE  
FROM 1930,

"MULE SKINNER BLUES," WHICH  
BECAME HER FIRST TOP 10 SINGLE.

WOMAN: THERE ARE SONGS LIKE  
THE "MULE SKINNER BLUES"

THAT ARE JUST CLASSICS.

FROM JIMMIE RODGERS  
AND HIS VERSION OF IT

TO BILL MONROE'S,  
TO ROSE MADDOX.

THERE ARE SONGS LIKE  
THE "MULE SKINNER BLUES"

THAT, YOU KNOW,  
THAT GO ALL THE WAY BACK.

SOMEBODY HEARS THAT  
AND DADDY LOVED THAT

AND GRANDPA LOVED THAT,  
AND THEY PASS THAT SONG DOWN.

IT'S A LITTLE LIKE AN HEIRLOOM.

YOU KNOW, SOMETHING THAT  
THEY CAN HOLD IN THE FAMILY.

THEY'RE LIKE KEEPSAKES.

NARRATOR: BUT WAGONER  
ALSO ENCOURAGED PARTON

TO RECORD MORE AND MORE  
OF THE SONGS

SHE HAD WRITTEN HERSELF,  
STARTING WITH "JOSHUA,"

WHICH BECAME HER FIRST  
NUMBER-ONE COUNTRY HIT,

AND THEN "COAT OF MANY COLORS"  
AND "JOLENE."

PARTON: â JOLENE,  
JOLENE, JOLENE, JOLENE â

â I'M BEGGING OF YOU, PLEASE  
DON'T TAKE MY MAN â

â JOLENE, JOLENE,  
JOLENE, JOLENE â

â PLEASE DON'T TAKE HIM  
JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN â

â YOUR BEAUTY IS  
BEYOND COMPARE â

â WITH FLAMING LOCKS  
OF AUBURN HAIR â

â WITH IVORY SKIN  
AND EYES OF EMERALD GREEN â

â YOUR SMILE IS LIKE  
A BREATH OF SPRING â

â YOUR VOICE IS SOFT LIKE  
SUMMER RAIN AND I CANNOT... â

WOMAN: YOU KNOW WHAT  
THAT FEELING IS LIKE--

"THAT GIRL'S PRETTIER.  
IS SHE GOING TO TAKE HIM AWAY?"

SHE COULD TAKE HIM  
AWAY, YOU KNOW.

IS HE GOING TO LEAVE?

PARTON: â HE TALKS ABOUT YOU  
IN HIS SLEEP â

â AND THERE'S NOTHING  
I CAN DO TO KEEP â

â FROM CRYING WHEN HE  
CALLS YOUR NAME, JOLENE â

SHE'S NOT CURSING HER OUT,  
SHE'S NOT YELLING AT HER,

SHE'S NOT BEING, YOU KNOW,  
FEISTY AND CAT WOMAN.

SHE'S JUST SAYING,  
"PLEASE DON'T TAKE MY MAN."

I MEAN, THERE'S SOMETHING  
ABOUT THAT LINE IN "JOLENE,"

"PLEASE DON'T TAKE HIM  
JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN."

THAT IS SO HEART-WRENCHING.

PARTON: "JOLENE,  
PLEASE DON'T TAKE HIM"

"EVEN THOUGH YOU CAN,  
JOLENE..."

NARRATOR: IN THE EARLY 1970s,  
PARTON HAD

5 NUMBER-ONE COUNTRY  
SOLO HITS,

ALL OF THEM SELF-WRITTEN;

WAGONER HAD NONE.

INSIDERS COULD SEE  
TENSIONS BUILDING.

MAN: DOLLY GOT SMART.

I GUESS SHE CAME SMART.

I THINK DOLLY LEARNED  
THAT SHE WAS NOT GOING TO GO

ANY FURTHER WITH  
HER CAREER AS LONG AS

SHE WAS IN PORTER'S SHADOW.

PARTON: WELL, I THINK PORTER  
HAD A REAL HARD TIME

AFTER OTHER PEOPLE STARTED  
RECORDING MY SONGS

AND I WAS WRITING AND I WAS  
GETTING TO BE PRETTY POPULAR.

AND IT WAS HIS SHOW.

I WASN'T TRYING TO HOG IT,

BUT I JUST KIND OF CARVED OUT

A LITTLE, YOU KNOW,  
PLACE FOR MYSELF.

BUT IT WAS  
A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP.

WE FOUGHT LIKE CATS AND DOGS.

WE WERE JUST BOTH  
VERY PASSIONATE PEOPLE.

THERE WAS NO WAY THAT  
I WASN'T GOING TO DO

WHAT I WAS GOING TO DO.

AND NO WAY I WAS  
GOING TO NOT DO

WHAT HE THOUGHT  
I WAS GOING TO DO.

NARRATOR: "PORTER DREAMED OF ME  
STAYING WITH HIS SHOW FOREVER,"

PARTON SAID, "AND I DREAMED OF  
HAVING MY OWN SHOW.

"I WROTE MORE AND MORE SONGS

AND DREAMED BIGGER  
AND BIGGER DREAMS."

PARTON: WHEN I WAS TRYING  
TO LEAVE THE SHOW,

I HAD TOLD PORTER  
I'D STAY 5 YEARS.

IT HAD BEEN 5, THEN IT WAS 6,  
THEN IT WAS 7.

HE WAS JUST HAVING  
A REAL HARD TIME

'CAUSE IT WAS GOING  
TO MESS UP HIS SHOW.

WE WERE VERY BOUND  
AND TIED TOGETHER

IN SO MANY EMOTIONAL WAYS.

AND HE JUST WOULD NOT HEAR IT.

AND SO, HE WAS GOING TO SUE ME;

HE WAS GOING TO DO THIS;  
HE WAS GOING TO DO THAT.

AND SO, I WENT HOME  
AND I THOUGHT,

"HE'S NOT GOING  
TO LISTEN TO ME."

'CAUSE I'VE SAID IT  
OVER AND OVER.

AND SO I THOUGHT,  
"DO WHAT YOU DO BEST.

JUST WRITE A SONG."

SO, I WROTE THE SONG,  
TOOK IT BACK IN THE NEXT DAY,

AND I SAID, "PORTER, SIT DOWN.

I'VE GOT SOMETHING  
I HAVE TO SING TO YOU."

SO, I SANG IT, AND HE  
WAS SITTING AT HIS DESK  
AND HE WAS CRYING.

HE SAID, "THAT'S  
THE BEST THING YOU EVER WROTE."

"OK, YOU CAN GO, BUT ONLY IF  
I CAN PRODUCE THAT RECORD."

AND HE DID,  
AND THE REST IS HISTORY.

NARRATOR: RELEASED A FEW MONTHS  
AFTER SHE LEFT, IT WOULD GO ON

TO BECOME DOLLY PARTON'S  
BEST-SELLING SONG.

â IF I SHOULD STAY

â I WOULD ONLY BE IN YOUR WAY

â SO I'LL GO

â BUT I KNOW

â I'LL THINK OF YOU  
EACH STEP OF THE WAY â

â AND I

â WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU

â I WILL ALWAYS  
LOVE YOU â

EMERY: THAT SONG, IT WAS  
AN ANTHEM TO PORTER WAGONER.

â ...SWEET MEMORIES

SHE WROTE IT, I THINK, BECAUSE  
HE HAD DONE SO MUCH FOR HER.

BUT SHE FELT IF  
SHE DIDN'T LEAVE HIM,

SHE WOULD JUST REMAIN  
PORTER'S GIRL SINGER.

â BUT I

â WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU

â I WILL...

HOLLY WILLIAMS:  
WRITING A BEAUTIFUL SONG

FROM THE MOST  
SIMPLE WORDS.

â LOVE YOU

"I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU.  
I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU.

I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU,"

WHEN SHE SINGS IT  
OVER AND OVER,

IT'S JUST SOMETHING THAT  
ANY OF US CAN RELATE TO.

â AND I  
WISH YOU JOY â

SHE WAS ABLE,  
LIKE HANK WILLIAMS,

TO TAKE THE MOST BASIC  
ONE-LINERS,

"I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU,"  
AND TURN IT INTO A MASTERPIECE.

â I WISH YOU LOVE

â AND I

â WILL ALWAYS  
LOVE YOU â

â I WILL ALWAYS  
LOVE YOU â

â I WILL  
ALWAYS LOVE YOU â

[CHEERING AND APPLAUSE]

LORETTA LYNN AND CONWAY TWITTY:  
â LOVE IS WHERE YOU FIND IT

NARRATOR: OTHER FAMOUS DUET  
TEAMS WERE STAYING TOGETHER.

BILL ANDERSON AND JAN HOWARD

SOMETIMES WROTE  
EACH OTHER'S SONGS.

DOTTIE WEST, WHO HAD  
BEEN IN NASHVILLE

FOR MORE THAN A DECADE,  
JOINED WITH KENNY ROGERS,

WHO HAD RECENTLY ARRIVED.

TWITTY: â ...IS ALMOST EMPTY

NARRATOR: LORETTA LYNN  
TEAMED UP WITH CONWAY TWITTY,

THE FORMER ROCKABILLY STAR WHO  
HAD RETURNED TO COUNTRY MUSIC.

TOGETHER, THEY RELEASED  
NEARLY A DOZEN DUET ALBUMS

AND HAD 5 NUMBER-ONE SINGLES.

LYNN: â WE KNOW IT'S  
WRONG FOR US TO MEET â

â BUT THE FIRE'S  
GONE OUT AT HOME â

TWITTY AND LYNN: â AND THERE'S  
NOTHIN' COLD AS ASHES â



â AFTER THE FIRE IS GONE

[APPLAUSE]

GEORGE JONES AND TAMMY WYNETTE:

â ROLLIN' IN MY  
SWEET BABY'S ARMS â

NARRATOR: BUT NO COUPLE  
CAPTIVATED AUDIENCES,

AND HEADLINES, MORE THAN

GEORGE JONES AND TAMMY WYNETTE.

JONES AND WYNETTE:

â I'LL LAY AROUND THE SHACK

â TILL THE MAIL TRAIN  
COMES BACK â

â AND I'LL ROLL IN  
MY SWEET BABY'S ARMS â

ANDERSON: I THINK PEOPLE  
REALLY FELT LIKE THEY WERE

GETTING A LOT OF THE TRUE STORY

AND GETTING THE STORY  
OF THEIR OWN LIVES

WHEN THIS INCREDIBLY TALENTED  
MALE SINGER

WAS SINGING WITH THIS BEAUTIFUL  
AND INCREDIBLY TALENTED

FEMALE SINGER,  
AND THEY'RE SINGING SONGS.

â WE'RE GONNA HOLD ON  
OK, IF, IF THEY CAN HOLD ON,

ME AND OLD FRED  
CAN HOLD ON, TOO.

OR ME AND OLD ETHEL, YOU KNOW?

AND I THINK PEOPLE SAW  
THEIR OWN LIVES IN THESE SONGS.

JONES AND WYNETTE:

â ...SWEET BABY'S ARMS

â ROLLING IN MY  
SWEET BABY'S ARMS, I'LL... â

NARRATOR: WHEN THEY GOT MARRIED  
BACK IN 1969,

BOTH TAMMY WYNETTE  
AND GEORGE JONES

WERE ALREADY  
WELL-KNOWN ARTISTS.

BILLED AS "MR. AND MRS.  
COUNTRY MUSIC,"

THEY DREW LARGE,  
ADORING CROWDS.

AND THEIR PRODUCER,  
BILLY SHERRILL,

MADE SURE THEY FED THEIR FANS  
A STEADY STRING OF DUET ALBUMS.

MAN: I SEE TAMMY  
LOOKING AT GEORGE'S LIPS

TRYING TO FIGURE OUT  
IF HE'S EVER GOING TO

DO IT TWICE THE SAME WAY

AND DOING HER DAMNEDEST  
TO PHRASE WITH HIM.

AND HIM WITH THAT LITTLE

BEADY-EYED POSSUM LOOK  
ABOUT HIM,

LOVING EVERY SECOND OF IT.

BOTH: "FOR BETTER OR WORST

"YOU'LL ALWAYS COME FIRST

"AND NO ONE CAN  
KEEP US APART"

NARRATOR: "WHEN WE WERE  
ONSTAGE," JONES SAID,

"WE WERE IN OUR OWN  
LITTLE HEAVEN."

BOTH: "...EACH OTHER

"FORSAKING ALL OTHERS

NARRATOR: BUT THIS WAS A THIRD  
MARRIAGE FOR BOTH OF THEM,

AND IT WAS NEVER TRANQUIL.

HIS BINGE DRINKING  
MADE HIM UNCONTROLLABLE.

SHE COULD BE EQUALLY VOLATILE.

"HE NIPPED," SHE SAID,  
"AND I NAGGED."

[CHEERING AND APPLAUSE]

WOMAN: I WAS FRIENDS WITH BOTH  
OF THEM WHEN THEY GOT TOGETHER.

AND I HAVE TO SAY,  
I THOUGHT, "OH, MY.

I DON'T KNOW WHETHER  
THIS CAN WORK OR NOT."

I TRULY THINK THAT  
GEORGE AND TAMMY

HAD A GREAT LOVE AFFAIR.

BUT THERE ARE CERTAINLY  
PROBLEMS THAT ARISE

FROM TWO STRONG CAREERS,

A STRONG DUET CAREER  
THROWN IN THERE,

FAMILY ADDED,  
AND GEORGE'S DRINKING

WAS JUST ALWAYS A PROBLEM, TOO.

SO, ALL OF THOSE ELEMENTS ADD TO  
EITHER LIVING OUT A COUNTRY SONG

OR WRITING A DAMN GOOD ONE.

BOTH: "WE'RE GONNA HOLD ON

NARRATOR: IN 1973,  
WYNETTE FILED FOR DIVORCE.

THEY RECONCILED LONG ENOUGH FOR  
THEM TO GO BACK INTO THE STUDIO

AND RECORD  
"WE'RE GONNA HOLD ON,"

WHICH ROSE TO NUMBER ONE.

BOTH: "ON TO EACH OTHER

NARRATOR: SHE WITHDREW  
HER PETITION.

"LIFE CAN BE ROUGH

"SOMETIMES IT'S KIND

"A REAL GOOD LIFE  
IS HARD TO FIND "

"IT BRINGS US  
HAPPINESS ALL  
THROUGH THE DAY "

"AND NOTHING'S  
GONNA EVER  
MAKE IT GO AWAY "

BOTH: "WE'RE GONNA HOLD ON

"WE'RE GONNA HOLD ON

"WE'RE GONNA HOLD ON TO  
EACH OTHER "

"WE'RE GONNA HOLD ON

[APPLAUSE]

NARRATOR: TWO YEARS LATER,  
WYNETTE FILED FOR DIVORCE AGAIN.

THIS TIME, THERE WAS  
NO TURNING BACK.

"GEORGE IS ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE  
WHO CAN'T TOLERATE HAPPINESS,"

SHE TOLD A REPORTER.

"IF EVERYTHING IS RIGHT,  
THERE IS SOMETHING IN HIM

THAT MAKES HIM DESTROY IT  
AND DESTROY ME WITH IT."

THEY EACH RELEASED  
POPULAR ALBUMS,

BUT AS SOLO ACTS ON THE ROAD,  
THEIR BOOKINGS SUFFERED.

AT WYNETTE'S CONCERTS,  
DISAPPOINTED FANS

OFTEN SHOUTED OUT,  
"WHERE'S GEORGE?"

WYNETTE: "I MAY SOMETIMES  
BOTHER YOU, TRY TO BE IN...."

NARRATOR: JONES'  
DRINKING INCREASED.

HE WOULD SOMETIMES BE SEEN  
IN ONE OF THE 27 CARS

HE BOUGHT AND SOLD THAT YEAR,

AIMLESSLY CIRCLING  
THE DRIVEWAY OF THE HOME

THE COUPLE HAD ONCE SHARED  
IN NASHVILLE.

SHE EMBARKED ON A SERIES  
OF HIGHLY PUBLICIZED

AND SHORT-LIVED ROMANCES--

WITH A MOVIE STAR,  
A PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYER,

A COUNTRY SINGER,  
A POLITICIAN, AND OTHERS.

AT A RECORDING SESSION  
IN LATE 1975,

SHE RECORDED A SONG  
SHE LATER CALLED

THE FAVORITE OF  
ALL HER SINGLES--

"TIL I CAN MAKE IT ON MY OWN."

WYNETTE: "TIL I CAN  
MAKE IT ON MY OWN"

NARRATOR: AS THE SESSION  
MUSICIANS GATHERED

TO HEAR THE PLAYBACK,

NO ONE IN THE STUDIO  
SPOKE A WORD.

"THEY KNEW," WYNETTE RECALLED,

"THE SONG WAS ABOUT GEORGE."

STILL, 4 MONTHS LATER,  
BILLY SHERRILL WAS ABLE

TO GET THE TWO OF THEM TOGETHER  
FOR ONE MORE DUET ALBUM.

ITS TITLE TRACK  
WAS "GOLDEN RING,"

WRITTEN BY RAFE VAN HOY  
AND BOBBY BRADDOCK.

MAN: "GOLDEN RING" DOES SOUND  
A LITTLE BIT LIKE AN OLD HYMN.

IT PROBABLY SOUNDS  
LIKE 10 OR 12

OLD SOUTHERN GOSPEL HYMNS  
KIND OF THROWN TOGETHER.

WHEN YOU GET TO  
THE CHORUS,

IT'S THAT OLD CHURCH  
SING-A-LONG THING.

â GOLDEN RING, GOLDEN RING,  
WITH ONE TINY, LITTLE STONE â

â CAST ASIDE, CAST ASIDE, LIKE  
THE LOVE THAT'S DEAD AND GONE â

â BY ITSELF, BY ITSELF,  
JUST A COLD METALLIC THING â

â ONLY LOVE CAN MAKE  
A GOLDEN WEDDING RING â

â DOO DOO DOO DOO

BOTH: â GOLDEN RING

â OOH

â WITH ONE TINY,  
LITTLE STONE â

â CAST ASIDE

â CAST ASIDE

â LIKE THE LOVE THAT'S  
DEAD AND GONE â

â BY ITSELF

â BY ITSELF

â IT'S JUST A COLD  
METALLIC THING â

â ONLY LOVE CAN MAKE  
A GOLDEN WEDDING RING â

â IN A PAWN SHOP IN CHICAGO

â ON A SUNNY SUMMER DAY

â A COUPLE GAZES AT  
THE WEDDING RINGS  
THERE ON DISPLAY â

â GOLDEN RING

[APPLAUSE]

NARRATOR: "GOLDEN RING" WOULD  
TOP THE COUNTRY CHARTS.

IT WAS PLAYING ON  
WYNETTE'S CAR RADIO

ON THE DAY SHE WAS  
ON HER WAY TO MARRY

HER FOURTH HUSBAND IN 1976.

IT WAS STILL ON THE CHARTS WHEN  
SHE DIVORCED HIM 44 DAYS LATER.

BY THIS TIME,  
THE SMOOTH NASHVILLE SOUND

HAD EVOLVED INTO  
SOMETHING EVEN SMOOTHER.

CHARLIE RICH: â MY BABY  
MAKES ME PROUD â

NARRATOR: PEOPLE CALLED IT  
"COUNTRYPOLITAN,"

AND PRODUCERS HOPED IT WOULD  
HELP THEIR ARTISTS CROSS OVER

TO THE LUCRATIVE POP MARKET.

RICH: â 'CAUSE PEOPLE  
LIKE TO TALK â

NARRATOR: BILLY SHERRILL

WAS MUSIC CITY'S

MOST RELIABLE  
COUNTRYPOLITAN HIT MAKER.

HE HELPED CHARLIE RICH,

A JOURNEYMAN  
RHYTHM AND BLUES SINGER,

REINVENT HIMSELF AS  
AN EASY-LISTENING,  
COUNTRY-POP STAR,

AND WHEN HE FOUND TANYA TUCKER,

A PRECOCIOUS 13-YEAR-OLD  
WITH A BIG VOICE,

HE GAVE HER SONGS  
WITH ADULT THEMES

THAT RAISED EYEBROWS  
AMONG COUNTRY MUSIC'S

MORE CONSERVATIVE FANS

AND CREATED DOZENS  
OF HIT RECORDS.

RICH: "AND SHE MAKES ME GLAD

NARRATOR: UP AND DOWN MUSIC ROW,  
OTHER PRODUCERS,

INCLUDING CHET ATKINS  
AND OWEN BRADLEY,

STEERED EVEN FARTHER AWAY  
FROM COUNTRY'S TWANG.

BUT THE BRIDGE  
TO CROSSOVER SUCCESS

WENT BOTH WAYS.

OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN:  
"YOU CAME WHEN I WAS HAPPY  
IN YOUR..."

NARRATOR: AUSTRALIA'S  
OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN

GOT HER CAREER LAUNCHED

WHEN HER EARLY  
POP SONGS WERE PROMOTED



TO COUNTRY RADIO STATIONS.

IN 1974, SHE WAS NAMED  
THE COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION'S

FEMALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR,

BEATING OUT DOLLY PARTON  
AND LORETTA LYNN.

COUNTRY TRADITIONALISTS  
WERE SURPRISED AND ANGRY.

NEWTON-JOHN: "IF YOU LOVE ME,  
LET ME KNOW"

WOMAN: IT SHOCKED ME.

THAT THE MUSIC WAS  
GETTING AWAY FROM US.

WE WERE LOSING...OUR IDENTITY,

SO TO SPEAK, I GUESS.

NARRATOR: THE FUROR  
WAS EVEN GREATER

AT THE NEXT YEAR'S AWARDS SHOW,  
WHEN CMA'S TOP HONOR--

COUNTRY MUSIC ENTERTAINER  
OF THE YEAR--

WENT TO A FOLK/POP SINGER

WHO WAS WATCHING FROM  
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD.

MAN: THE WINNER...

[LAUGHTER]

MY FRIEND MR. JOHN DENVER.

[CHEERING AND APPLAUSE]

STUART: THINGS WERE CHANGING.  
AND NOT EVERYBODY

AGREED WITH IT.

I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE SAW IT  
AS THE BOUNDARIES

WERE BEING BROADENED

AND EXPANDED UPON.

AND OTHER PEOPLE SAW IT AS THAT

COUNTRY MUSIC IS  
LOSING ITS SOUL.

âa I'M GOING DOWN  
TO AUSTIN, TEXAS âa

âa I'M GOING DOWN  
TO SAVE MY SOUL, GET... âa

NARRATOR: WHILE OLDER,  
TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

ENGAGED IN A TUG OF WAR  
WITH THE COUNTRYPOLITANS,

NASHVILLE WAS ALSO  
ATTRACTING A NEW WAVE

OF YOUNG SINGER-SONGWRITERS  
WHO HAD THEIR OWN IDEAS

ABOUT THE DIRECTION  
OF COUNTRY MUSIC.

âa OH, MY, MOMMA, AIN'T THAT  
TEXAS COOKIN' SOMETHING âa

âa OH, MY, MOMMA, IT'LL STOP YO'  
BELLY AND BACKBONE BUMPIN' âa

âa OH, MY, MOMMA, AIN'T THAT  
TEXAS COOKIN' GOOD âa

âa OH, MY, MOMMA, EAT IT  
EVERY DAY IF I COULD âa

NARRATOR: FOR THEM,  
CREATING A WELL-CRAFTED SONG

WAS MORE IMPORTANT  
THAN WRITING A HIT,

THOUGH THEY ALL DREAMED  
THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE BOTH,

LIKE THE HUGELY SUCCESSFUL  
KRIS KRISTOFFERSON.

AND LIKE KRISTOFFERSON,  
MANY OF THE NEW ARRIVALS

WERE FROM TEXAS.

PEOPLE ASK ME AND SAY,  
"WHAT IS IT ABOUT

THESE TEXAS SONGWRITERS?"

YOU KNOW, "WHAT IS IT?"  
AND I SAY,

"WE'RE THE BEST LIARS  
IN THE WORLD."

TEXANS HAVE ALWAYS HAD  
THIS INDEPENDENT STREAK

OF DOING ... THE WAY  
THEY WANT IT,

THE WAY THEY HEAR IT,  
THE WAY THEY WANT TO DO IT.

NARRATOR: WHEN GUY CLARK  
WAS A LITTLE BOY

IN THE SMALL WEST TEXAS TOWN  
OF MONAHANS,

HIS FAMILY DIDN'T OWN  
A RECORD PLAYER

AND INSTEAD  
SPENT THEIR EVENINGS

READING POETRY ALOUD  
TO EACH OTHER.

CLARK GOT HIS FIRST GUITAR  
WHEN THEY MOVED TO SOUTH TEXAS,

AND THE FIRST SONGS  
HE LEARNED WERE IN SPANISH.

BY HIS EARLY TWENTIES,  
HE WAS PERFORMING IN

FOLK CLUBS AND COFFEE HOUSES  
AROUND HOUSTON.

AFTER A YEAR IN LOS ANGELES,  
HE RELOCATED TO NASHVILLE

WITH HIS WIFE SUSANNA,  
A PAINTER AND SONGWRITER.

AT THE NEWLY OPENED EXIT/IN,

A SMALL LIVE-MUSIC VENUE  
ON ELLISTON PLACE

NEAR VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY,

CLARK AND OTHERS FOUND A PLACE  
TO TRY OUT THEIR LATEST SONGS

IN FRONT OF A YOUNGER,  
MORE PROGRESSIVE AUDIENCE.

STUART: DOWN ON ELLISTON PLACE,  
IT WAS KIND OF LIKE

PARIS IN THE TWENTIES  
MUST HAVE BEEN BECAUSE

IT WAS ALL BOHEMIANS  
AND NEW THINKING,

FORWARD-THINKING  
COUNTRY MUSIC PEOPLE.

CLARK: THE THING ABOUT  
NASHVILLE, IT'S NOT THAT

THEY'RE SQUASHING  
YOUR CREATIVITY,

BUT THEY WILL TO MAKE A BUCK.

THE POINT IS  
THEY'RE IN BUSINESS.

THEY'RE HERE TO MAKE MONEY,  
NOT TO SUPPORT

YOUR ARTISTIC BENT, YOU KNOW?

â€” I CAN JUST GET OFF  
OF THIS L.A. FREEWAY â€”

â€” WITHOUT GETTING  
KILLED OR CAUGHT â€”

â€” I'D BE DOWN THE ROAD  
IN A CLOUD OF SMOKE â€”

â€” TO SOME LAND I AIN'T BOUGHT

CROWELL: WHEN I ARRIVED  
IN NASHVILLE,

THE WHOLE IDEA OUT ON  
THE STREET IS THAT,

"MAN, I'VE GOT  
TO WORK HARD ENOUGH

"AND HAVE THE DEDICATION  
TO LIFT MY ART UP TO A LEVEL

WHERE I CAN GET ON  
THE EXIT/IN STAGE,"

WHERE YOU WOULD SEE  
KRIS KRISTOFFERSON PERFORM

AND GUY CLARK PERFORM.

NARRATOR: RODNEY CROWELL HAD  
GROWN UP IN THE HOUSTON AREA,

STEEPED IN COUNTRY MUSIC.

HIS PARENTS MET  
AT A ROY ACUFF CONCERT,

AND CROWELL WAS  
ONLY TWO YEARS OLD

WHEN HIS FATHER  
INSISTED ON TAKING HIM

TO SEE HANK WILLIAMS PERFORM.

BY AGE 11, HE WAS PLAYING IN  
HIS FATHER'S HONKY-TONK BAND.

AT 15, CROWELL  
HAD HIS OWN GROUP

THAT TOURED SMALL TOWNS  
PROMISING TO PERFORM EVERYTHING

FROM THE BEACH BOYS  
AND THE BEATLES

TO RHYTHM AND BLUES

AND, THEIR BUSINESS CARD SAID,

"COUNTRY, IF YOU WANT IT."

HE WAS 22 WHEN  
HE CAME TO NASHVILLE

AND SOON BEGAN SHOWING UP AT  
THE UNOFFICIAL GATHERING PLACE

FOR LIKE-MINDED MUSICIANS--

THE HOME OF  
GUY AND SUSANNA CLARK.

ââ ALL RIGHT NOW,

I'VE JUST HIT  
MY STRIDE

RIGHT OFF THE BAT,  
LORD, I'M DRUNK ON  
BLUEBIRD WINE

YES, IT'S  
ALL RIGHT NOW

I'VE JUST HIT  
MY STRIDE

LORD, IT JUST  
STARTED, LORD

AND I'M DRUNK ON  
BLUEBERRY WINE

CROWELL: WE NEVER CALLED.

WE JUST SHOWED UP  
BANGING ON THE DOOR.

YOU KNOW, AND SOMETIMES  
GUY JUST SAID, "GO HOME.

NOT TONIGHT."

THEN, OTHER TIMES,  
HE AND SUSANNA

WOULD CRAWL OUT OF BED  
AND GET DRESSED,

AND STAY UP WITH US TILL  
DAYLIGHT, JUST TRADING SONGS,

TALKING ABOUT HOW  
TO GET IT DONE.

ANYBODY WAS WELCOME  
THAT PLAYED GOOD MUSIC

AND WASN'T TOO MUCH  
OF AN ASS...,

AND JUST, YOU KNOW,  
"COME ON OVER."

CROWELL: I REMEMBER  
GUY CLARK TELLING ME,

"YOU'RE A TALENTED GUY."

HE SAID, "YOU CAN BE A STAR.

"YOU PROBABLY HAVE  
THE TALENT TO DO IT,

"OR YOU CAN BE AN ARTIST.

"PICK ONE.

THEY'RE BOTH  
WORTHWHILE PURSUITS."

â€

NARRATOR: THE MOST FREQUENT  
VISITOR TO THE CLARKS' HOUSE

WAS THEIR CLOSE FRIEND,  
ANOTHER TROUBADOUR FROM TEXAS,

THE BRILLIANT  
AND EQUALLY ECCENTRIC

TOWNES VAN ZANDT.

VAN ZANDT: â€ IF I NEEDED YOU

â€ WOULD YOU COME TO ME?  
WOULD YOU COME... â€

NARRATOR: HE WAS BORN  
IN FORT WORTH

TO A PROMINENT FAMILY,

BUT TOWNES HAD TURNED AWAY FROM

HIS FATHER'S AND GRANDFATHER'S  
PROFESSION AS LAWYERS

TO PURSUE A VAGABOND'S LIFE  
AS A SINGER-SONGWRITER.

THE BLUES GUITARIST  
LIGHTNIN' HOPKINS

HAD BEEN THE BIGGEST INFLUENCE  
ON HIS MUSIC;

ANOTHER HERO WAS HANK WILLIAMS,

WHOSE TURBULENT  
AND TRAGICALLY SHORT LIFE

VAN ZANDT SEEMED  
DETERMINED TO FOLLOW.

HE DRANK HEAVILY  
AND CONSTANTLY,

WAS HOSPITALIZED  
FOR MANIC DEPRESSION,

BECAME ADDICTED TO HEROIN  
FOR A WHILE,

AND SPENT HIS 29th BIRTHDAY  
CONVINCED HE WAS GOING TO DIE,

JUST AS HANK HAD AT THAT AGE.

CLARK: HE DIDN'T WANT  
TO BE A STAR AS SUCH.

HE WANTED TO BE A POET.

I WAS ALWAYS INSPIRED BY HIM.

BUT TO BE INSPIRED BY TOWNES WAS  
DIFFERENT THAN BEING LIKE HIM.

IF YOU WANTED TO BE LIKE TOWNES,  
YOU HAD TO BE DEAD.

NARRATOR: VAN ZANDT SPENT  
MOST OF HIS TIME ON THE ROAD--

SOMETIMES HITCHHIKING FROM  
ONE PERFORMANCE TO ANOTHER;

LIVING IN RUNDOWN MOTELS  
OR RENTED SHACKS;

WRITING ALL THE TIME,  
INCLUDING "IF I NEEDED YOU,"

WHICH HE SAID  
HE COMPOSED IN HIS SLEEP.

â IF I NEEDED YOU,  
WOULD YOU COME TO ME? â

â WOULD YOU COME TO ME  
AND EASE MY PAIN? â

â IF YOU NEEDED ME

â I WOULD  
COME TO YOU â

â I'D SWIM THE SEAS  
FOR TO EASE YOUR PAIN â

NARRATOR: BUT IT WAS  
ANOTHER SONG OF HIS



THAT WOULD HAVE A PROFOUND  
EFFECT ON COUNTRY MUSIC

AND THE STARTLING  
ARRAY OF MUSICIANS

WHO WOULD FEEL COMPELLED  
TO PERFORM IT.

IT TELLS THE TALE OF  
A MEXICAN BANDIT NAMED PANTHO

AND HIS FRIEND LEFTY,  
WHO MAY HAVE BETRAYED HIM.

PANTHO DIES YOUNG;  
LEFTY LIVES TO AN OLD AGE,

SINGING IN A BAR FAR NORTH  
OF THE BORDER, IN OHIO.

VAN ZANDT: "LIVING ON THE ROAD,  
MY FRIEND "

" WAS GONNA KEEP YOU  
FREE AND CLEAN "

CLARK: "PANTHO AND LEFTY"  
WAS ONE OF THOSE SONGS THAT

YOU REALLY CAN'T  
PICK IT APART, YOU KNOW,

AND HAVE IT MAKE SENSE.

YOU HAVE TO JUST  
LET IT BE, YOU KNOW?

IT'S PERFECTLY WRITTEN.

"HE WORE HIS GUN  
OUTSIDE HIS PANTS

FOR ALL THE HONEST WORLD  
TO FEEL."

I MEAN, WHO WOULDN'T WANT  
TO WRITE THAT LINE?

"PANTHO WAS A BANDIT BOY,

HIS HORSE WAS FAST  
AS POLISHED STEEL."

VAN ZANDT: " PANTHO WAS  
A BANDIT, BOYS "

â HIS HORSE WAS FAST  
AS POLISHED STEEL â

â WORE HIS GUN  
OUTSIDE HIS PANTS â

â FOR ALL THE HONEST WORLD  
TO FEEL â

â BUT PANTCHO MET  
HIS MATCH, YOU KNOW â

â ON THE DESERTS  
DOWN IN MEXICO â

â AND NOBODY HEARD  
HIS DYING WORDS â

â BUT THAT'S THE WAY IT GOES

â NOW THE POETS TELL  
HOW PANTCHO FELL â

â AND LEFTY'S LIVING  
IN A CHEAP HOTEL â

â THE DESERT'S QUIET  
AND CLEVELAND'S COLD â

â SO THE STORY ENDS,  
WE'RE TOLD, PANTCHO... â

WOMAN: IT'S SO POIGNANT.  
IT'S HEARTBREAKING.

"PANTCHO NEEDS YOUR PRAYERS,  
IT'S TRUE.

"BUT SAVE A FEW FOR LEFTY, TOO.

HE ONLY DID WHAT HE HAD TO DO  
AND NOW HE'S GROWING OLD."

VAN ZANDT: â AND NOW  
HE'S GROWING OLD â

NARRATOR: BY 1975,  
TOWNES VAN ZANDT

HAD RECORDED 6 ALBUMS,  
REVERED BY OTHER SONGWRITERS.

NONE OF THEM WAS  
COMMERCIALY SUCCESSFUL,

BUT HE HAD DEVELOPED  
A SMALL, CULT-LIKE FOLLOWING.

LIKE HIS GOOD FRIEND GUY CLARK,  
HE PERFORMED MOSTLY AT

SMALLER VENUES  
AROUND THE COUNTRY.

"NASHVILLE," HE TOLD  
A REPORTER,

"IS JUST NOT GEARED  
FOR MINOR KEYS."

CLARK: HIS SONGS WERE DARK.

SOMEBODY AT A SHOW ASKED HIM,

"MAN, WHY DON'T YOU  
DO A FUNNY SONG?"

HE SAID, "THOSE WERE  
THE FUNNY SONGS."

NARRATOR: GROWING UP IN  
THE SOUTH TEXAS TOWN OF SABINAL,

90 MILES NORTH OF  
THE MEXICAN BORDER,

YOUNG JOHNNY RODRIGUEZ  
LOVED MARIACHI MUSIC,

BUT ALSO THE SONGS  
OF JIMMIE RODGERS,

HANK WILLIAMS,  
AND MERLE HAGGARD.

I WAS DRAWN TO  
COUNTRY MUSIC BECAUSE

I COULD RELATE MORE ABOUT  
WHAT THEY WERE SINGING ABOUT.

YOU KNOW, AND ALSO, I MEAN,  
IT WAS JUST LIKE, UH,

IT WAS THE MUSIC  
OF OUR PEOPLE.

I THINK IN MEXICAN MUSIC,  
YOU HAVE STORIES.

MEXICAN MUSIC AND COUNTRY MUSIC  
SAID ALMOST THE SAME THING,

JUST IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES.

NARRATOR: IN THE EARLY 1970s,  
RODRIGUEZ WAS WORKING

AT A TEXAS TOURIST ATTRACTION  
CALLED ALAMO VILLAGE

WHEN THE COUNTRY STAR  
TOM T. HALL

HAPPENED TO HEAR  
HIM PERFORMING.

RODRIGUEZ: "I CAN'T STOP  
LOVING YOU"

"I MADE UP MY MIND

"I CAN'T STOP...

HALL: THEY WERE CALLING HIM  
JOHNNY ROGERS.

AND I SAID, "HOW DID  
A MEXICAN GUY

GET A NAME LIKE JOHNNY ROGERS?"

RODRIGUEZ: WELL, MY MANAGER,  
ONE OF HIS BIG HEROES,

ROY ROGERS, HE JUST, UH, SAID,

"WELL, LET'S JUST  
CALL YOU JOHNNY ROGERS.

THAT'S A COUNTRY MUSIC NAME."

HALL: I SAID, "WELL, IF YOU COME  
TO NASHVILLE AND PICK WITH ME,

"WE'RE GOING TO CALL YOU  
JOHNNY RODRIGUEZ.

"THAT'S A MUCH PRETTIER NAME

AND IT'S WHO YOU ARE  
AND WE'LL DO THAT."

NARRATOR: HALL ARRANGED FOR  
RODRIGUEZ TO COME TO NASHVILLE

AND SET UP AN AUDITION  
WITH A RECORD LABEL.

HALL: I SAID,  
"I'M NOT A TALENT SCOUT,"

BUT I SAID, "LISTEN TO  
THIS KID SING THIS SONG."

SO, HE STARTED OFF  
AND HE WAS SINGING

"I CAN'T STOP LOVING YOU,"

HALF IN ENGLISH  
AND HALF IN SPANISH.

AND THEY SAID,  
"WE'LL SIGN HIM UP."

[RODRIGUEZ SINGING IN SPANISH]

NARRATOR: RODRIGUEZ WOULD HAVE  
15 CONSECUTIVE TOP 10 HITS

AND BECOME THE FIRST  
MEXICAN-AMERICAN TO BE

A MAJOR COUNTRY MUSIC STAR.

RODRIGUEZ: I SAY THIS  
WITH ALL SINCERITY,

I NEVER HAD A CROSS FEELING  
IN THIS CITY.

TO THIS DAY, I'VE NEVER  
FELT LIKE THAT.

IT MAKES ME ALMOST WANT TO CRY.  
I'M SERIOUS.

BUT THESE PEOPLE  
ARE SO NICE

THAT IT REALLY STILL  
TOUCHES ME TILL TODAY.

âa IN DREAMS OF YESTERDAY

[APPLAUSE]

NARRATOR: IN 1975, TWO YEARS

AFTER RODRIGUEZ WAS NOMINATED

FOR THE COUNTRY  
MUSIC ASSOCIATION'S

MALE VOCALIST  
OF THE YEAR AWARD,

BALDEMAR HUERTA, THE SON OF  
A MIGRANT FARM WORKER  
IN SOUTH TEXAS,  
PERFORMING AS FREDDY FENDER,  
CAME OUT WITH HIS OWN HIT SONG,  
"BEFORE THE NEXT  
TEARDROP FALLS,"  
WHICH TOPPED BOTH  
THE POP AND COUNTRY CHARTS.

[SINGING IN SPANISH]

LATER, HE AND ACCORDION PLAYER  
FLACO JIMENEZ

WOULD HELP FORM  
THE TEXAS TORNADOS,

WHO FEATURED  
THE DISTINCTIVE WORKING-CLASS

CONJUNTO DANCE MUSIC THAT HAD  
GROWN UP ALONG THE BORDER.

â BEFORE THE NEXT  
TEARDROP FALLS â

â AND I'LL BE THERE

â BEFORE THE NEXT  
TEARDROP FALLS â

[APPLAUSE]

â

WAYLON JENNINGS:  
â I'VE BEEN A FOOL

â I'VE BEEN A FOOL

â FORGIVIN' YOU EACH TIME  
THAT YOU'VE DONE ME WRONG â

â I'VE BEEN  
A LONG TIME LEAVIN' â

â BUT IT'LL BE  
A LONG TIME GONE â

MAN: HE SANG AS GOOD  
AS HANK WILLIAMS,

AND HE WAS REALLY  
A GOOD SONGWRITER.

HIS VOICE WAS WHAT  
TORE ME UP, THOUGH.

HE JUST--HE JUST HAD...  
I DON'T KNOW,

IT'S JUST LIKE THE WAY  
HANK WILLIAMS TORE ME UP.

HE'S...HE COULD  
SING SONGS THAT I CAN'T.

JENNINGS: "HELLO, HIGH LINE,  
HELLO, HIGHWAY"

"HERE COME A BIG, OLD SEMI  
MY WAY"

"STICK UP MY THUMB,  
HEAR THE TRUCK COME"

"TREES GOIN' BY,  
LOOKIN' LIKE A FLY"

"ON THE BIG LEGS ARE MY  
LEVIS...I BEEN"

NARRATOR: BORN IN  
LITTLEFIELD, TEXAS

DURING THE DUST BOWL IN 1937,

WAYLON JENNINGS'  
EARLIEST CHILDHOOD MEMORY

WAS OF HIS FATHER  
CONNECTING THE FAMILY'S RADIO

TO THE PICKUP TRUCK'S BATTERY  
SO THEY COULD LISTEN

TO THE CARTER FAMILY  
OUT OF DEL RIO'S

"BORDER BLASTER" STATION

AND TO THE GRAND OLE OPRY  
OUT OF NASHVILLE.

"IN MY HOUSE," HE RECALLED,  
"IT WAS THE BIBLE ON THE TABLE,

"THE FLAG ON THE WALLS,

AND BILL MONROE'S  
PICTURE BESIDE IT."

HIS MOTHER CRIED  
EVERY TIME ROY ACUFF SANG

"WRECK ON THE HIGHWAY."

JENNINGS: "STICK UP MY THUMB,  
HEAR THE TRUCK COME "

" TREES GOIN' BY,  
LOOKIN' LIKE A FLY "

" ON THE BIG...

NARRATOR: AS A TEENAGER,  
JENNINGS WAS ESPECIALLY DRAWN

TO HANK WILLIAMS  
AND HONKY-TONK MUSIC

AND STARTED PERFORMING IT  
IN LOCAL BARS.

WORKING AS A DISC JOCKEY  
AT A SMALL RADIO STATION,

HE ALSO SOAKED UP  
OTHER TYPES OF MUSIC:

RHYTHM AND BLUES, AND THEN  
ROCKABILLY AND ROCK AND ROLL.

JENNINGS: "BE A LONG  
TIME GONE "

[CHEERING AND APPLAUSE]

NARRATOR:  
IN 1959, HE WENT ON TOUR WITH

HIS GOOD FRIEND BUDDY HOLLY,

FROM NEARBY LUBBOCK,  
AND IT WAS ONLY BY CHANCE

THAT JENNINGS WASN'T  
IN THE SMALL AIRPLANE

THAT KILLED HOLLY  
AND TWO OTHER MUSICIANS

WHEN IT CRASHED IN  
AN IOWA CORNFIELD.



BY THE EARLY 1960s,  
JENNINGS WAS IN ARIZONA,

PACKING IN HUGE CROWDS  
AND CLEARING \$1,500 A WEEK

AT A NIGHT SPOT  
CALLED JD'S IN SCOTTSDALE.

JENNINGS: "COME ON, SUGAR

NARRATOR: COUNTRY STAR  
BOBBY BARE HEARD HIM THERE,

AND CONVINCED CHET ATKINS AT RCA  
TO INVITE HIM TO NASHVILLE.

BEFORE HE AGREED TO LEAVE HIS

WELL-PAYING STEADY GIG  
IN ARIZONA,

JENNINGS ASKED FELLOW TEXAN  
WILLIE NELSON FOR HIS ADVICE.

"STAY AWAY FROM NASHVILLE,"  
NELSON TOLD HIM.

"THEY'LL JUST  
BREAK YOUR HEART."

JENNINGS: "CANDY,  
CANDY, CANDY"

"I'VE GOT A SWEET, SWEET  
PIECE FOR YOU"

NARRATOR: HE WENT ANYWAY.

BUT JUST AS HE HAD  
WITH WILLIE NELSON,

ATKINS HAD TROUBLE  
TRYING TO MOLD JENNINGS

INTO A COUNTRY STAR.

WOMAN: "DON'T LOOK  
FOR ME"

MAN: "I MUST GO

"DON'T WASTE  
YOUR TIME"

"I MUST GO

JENNINGS: "DON'T LOOK FOR ME

"DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME

NARRATOR: THEIR FIRST ALBUM  
TOGETHER WAS FOLK-COUNTRY.

JENNINGS: "THAT'S  
MORE MY KIND "

NARRATOR: THEIR SECOND WAS  
FILLED WITH THE SMOOTHED-OUT

NASHVILLE SOUND OF THE TIME.

JENNINGS:  
"...DON'T LOOK FOR ME

NARRATOR: A THIRD INCLUDED  
A BALLAD BY THE BEATLES.

AND ON ANOTHER, JENNINGS CROONED  
THE POP HIT "MACARTHUR PARK."

WOMAN: "I MUST GO

NARRATOR: NONE OF IT  
SOUNDED LIKE

WAYLON'S PERFORMANCES  
BACK IN ARIZONA.

JENNINGS: "I DON'T CARE  
IF THE SUN DON'T SHINE "

"I DON'T CARE  
IF THE BELLS DON'T CHIME "

NARRATOR: "THEY WERE GOOD,  
SMOOTH RECORDS," HE SAID,

"BUT I WAS ROUGHER  
THAN A GODDAMN CORN COB.

ALL THE DAMN SAND I SWALLOWED  
IN TEXAS IS IN MY SINGING."

JENNINGS: "...AS LONG  
AS YOU LOVE ME, SO, DARLING "

WOMAN: WAYLON NEEDED  
TO JUST CREATE.

I KIND OF PUT IT  
IN VERY SIMPLE TERMS.

YOU KNOW, THEY TOOK  
A THOROUGHbred

AND TREATED HIM LIKE A MULE.

NARRATOR: IN 1969,  
HE MARRIED JESSI COLTER,

A LOS ANGELES-BASED SINGER  
WHO WAS USED TO HAVING

GREATER CREATIVE CONTROL  
IN THE STUDIO.

COLTER: YOU COULD  
TAKE YOUR MUSICIANS,

YOU COULD TAKE YOUR SONGS,  
YOU COULD HAVE A HAND

IN CHOOSING YOUR OWN PRODUCER,

AND BASICALLY BE  
MORE INDEPENDENT

IN PUTTING IT TOGETHER SO IT'S  
TRULY A RESULT OF WHO YOU ARE.

HERE, THERE WAS AN OLD GUARD.  
YOU KNOW?

IT WAS KIND OF LIKE  
A LARGE CONGLOMERATE  
MAKING REFRIGERATORS,

LIKE RCA MAKING TVs.

ALL WAYLON WANTED  
WAS FOR HIS MUSIC

THAT HE WAS DOING LIVE,  
ON THE STAGE,

AND DRIVING THE PEOPLE CRAZY,

TO SOUND EXACTLY  
LIKE THAT ON THE RECORD.

AND IT DIDN'T.  
IT DIDN'T.

NELSON: WAYLON WAS, YOU KNOW,  
A REAL ARTIST.

HE KNEW WHAT HE WANTED AND HE  
WAS RUNNING INTO THE SAME THINGS

THAT A LOT OF US WERE  
RUNNING IN THERE.

AND HE DECIDED HE WANTED  
TO DO IT HIS OWN WAY,

WHICH WAS BASICALLY TAKE HIS  
BAND IN THE STUDIO, WHICH, UH,

WAS NOT THAT EASY TO DO  
BACK IN THOSE DAYS.

JENNINGS: "SO, DARLIN',  
LET IT RAIN"

NARRATOR: "I WAS  
THE BLACK SHEEP OF NASHVILLE,"

JENNINGS RECALLED.

"THEY THOUGHT I WAS  
A TROUBLEMAKER."

JENNINGS: "LONG AS  
YOU LOVE ME..."

NARRATOR: FUELED BY  
AMPHETAMINES AND COCAINE,

HE SIMPLY DIDN'T SLEEP  
AND SPENT CEASELESS HOURS

PLAYING PINBALL AT  
A LOCAL BURGER BOY.

JENNINGS: "JUST AS LONG  
AS YOU LOVE ME"

[CROWD CHEERING]

NARRATOR: IN 1972,  
JENNINGS CHANGED MANAGERS

AND NEGOTIATED  
A NEW CONTRACT WITH RCA

THAT BROKE ALL THE PREVAILING  
NASHVILLE RULES.

HE WOULD HAVE HIS OWN  
PRODUCTION COMPANY

TO OVERSEE HIS RECORDINGS,

CHOOSE HIS OWN SONGS,

USE HIS OWN BAND

IN THE STUDIO.

JENNINGS: "WELL,  
I WOKE UP THIS MORNING "

" IT WAS DRIZZLING RAIN

" AROUND THE CURVE  
COME A PASSENGER TRAIN "

" HEARD SOMEBODY YODEL  
AND A HOBO MOAN "

" JIMMY, HE'S DEAD, HE'S BEEN  
A LONG TIME GONE "

" BEEN A LONG TIME GONE

NARRATOR: JENNINGS QUICKLY  
BROKE ANOTHER RULE,

WHICH REQUIRED RCA ALBUMS  
TO BE RECORDED

WITH RCA ENGINEERS,  
IN RCA STUDIOS.

INSTEAD, HE BEGAN USING  
AN INDEPENDENT STUDIO

OWNED BY HIS FRIEND  
TOMPALL GLASER,

WHERE HE COULD HAVE SESSIONS  
AS LONG AS HE WANTED

AT ANY TIME OF  
THE DAY OR NIGHT.

JENNINGS: "...GET TO HEAVEN,  
GOTTA D-I-E "

" YOU GOTTA PUT ON  
YOUR COAT AND T-I-E "

NARRATOR: JENNINGS  
AND HIS FRIENDS

CALLED THEIR NEW STUDIO HANGOUT

"HILLBILLY CENTRAL."

JENNINGS: " LIKE A D-O-G,  
LIKE A D-O-G "

SMITH: I WOULD GO TO WORK  
AND GO INTO MY OFFICE

AND THERE WOULD BE PEOPLE  
ASLEEP IN MY OFFICE,

HAD BEEN ASLEEP IN THERE  
ALL NIGHT LONG.

JUST STONED OUT OF THEIR MIND,

ONE OF THEM ASLEEP WITH  
THE HEAD ON MY TYPEWRITER

AND THE OTHER ONE ASLEEP  
OVER THERE IN THE CHAIR.

AND I CHASED THEM OUT.

I TOLD THEM THEY BETTER NOT

COME UP THERE NO MORE  
WHEN I WASN'T THERE.

BUT THEY CAME BACK.  
OF COURSE THEY DID.

NARRATOR: JENNINGS LET HIS HAIR  
GROW LONGER AND SHAGGIER,

ADDED A BEARD AND MUSTACHE,

GAVE UP SHINY SUITS COMPLETELY,

IN FAVOR OF BLUE JEANS  
AND LEATHER VESTS.

AND HE STARTED MAKING THE MUSIC  
HE WANTED TO MAKE.

HE INVITED COWBOY JACK CLEMENT,

NASHVILLE'S MOST  
FREE-SPIRITED PRODUCER,

TO WORK ON HIS NEXT ALBUM.

MUSICIANS KNEW COWBOY JACK  
LIKED WHAT THEY WERE DOING

WHEN THEY SAW HIM DANCING  
BEHIND THE CONTROL BOARD.

JENNINGS: "LOOKS LIKE  
THE PLACE I CAME IN"

COLTER: WHEN YOU'D GET IT  
TO THE RIGHT PLACE,

JACK WOULD DANCE.

SO, HE FELT IT  
FROM THE INSIDE OUT.

IT WASN'T ABOUT MARKETING OR...

HE WAS LOOKING FOR GREAT SONGS

AND HE WAS  
LOOKING TO SENSE IT.

AND THAT'S WHAT HE DID.

NARRATOR: JENNINGS BROUGHT HIS  
BAND INTO HILLBILLY CENTRAL,

WHERE HE AND CLEMENT BEGAN  
RECORDING AN ALBUM CALLED

"DREAMING MY DREAMS."

IT WAS AN ECLECTIC  
COLLECTION OF SONGS,

PAYING HOMAGE TO  
COUNTRY MUSIC LEGENDS LIKE

JIMMIE RODGERS,  
BOB WILLS, ROGER MILLER,

AND ESPECIALLY HANK WILLIAMS.

[APPLAUSE]

JENNINGS CHOSE  
TO OPEN HIS ALBUM

WITH A SONG HE HAD WRITTEN  
ON THE BACK OF AN ENVELOPE

ON THE WAY TO THE STUDIO.

IT SUMMARIZED HIS  
NASHVILLE EXPERIENCE.

"ARE YOU SURE HANK  
DONE IT THIS WAY?"

"A LORD, IT'S  
THE SAME OLD TUNE A"

"A FIDDLE AND GUITAR,  
WHERE DO WE... A"

MAN: "ARE YOU SURE THIS IS  
THE WAY IT'S GOING TO WORK?"

"I DON'T THINK SO."

"THE SAME OLD SONG,  
FIDDLE, AND GUITAR,

"WHERE DO WE TAKE IT FROM HERE?

"RHINESTONE SUITS  
AND BIG SHINY CARS,

IT'S BEEN THAT WAY FOR YEARS."

IT SAYS IT ALL RIGHT THERE.  
THIS HAS GOT TO CHANGE.

â WE NEED A CHANGE

AND WHY DOES IT HAVE TO CHANGE?

BECAUSE IT DOESN'T  
SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE

WHO ARE LISTENING TO OUR MUSIC.

â SOMEBODY  
TOLD ME... â

BENSON: IT WAS A CALL TO ARMS,  
KIND OF, YOU KNOW?

â SON, YOU FINALLY  
GOT IT MADE â

â OLD HANK  
MADE IT HERE â

â WE'RE ALL SURE  
THAT YOU WILL â

â BUT I DON'T THINK HANK  
DONE IT THIS WAY, NO â

â I DON'T THINK  
HANK DONE IT THIS WAY â

â TAKE IT...

NARRATOR: "DREAMING MY DREAMS"  
BECAME A HUGE HIT.

NOW OTHER COUNTRY ARTISTS  
WERE DEMANDING

CONTRACTS LIKE WAYLON'S.

AND MORE AND MORE PEOPLE WERE



SHOWING UP AT HILLBILLY CENTRAL.

SMITH: FIRST OF ALL,  
THE BUILDING DIDN'T  
HAVE WINDOWS.

AND EVERYBODY,  
UP AND DOWN MUSIC ROW,

WANTED TO COME IN THAT BUILDING  
TO SEE WHAT IS GOING ON THERE.

WILLIE WOULD COME TO TOWN  
AND HE WOULD BE THERE.

KINKY FRIEDMAN  
AND THE TEXAS JEW BOYS

PRACTICALLY LIVED THERE.

THEY'D BE WALKING  
UP AND DOWN THE HALLS.

SHEL SILVERSTEIN  
HUNG OUT THERE.

AND THE GREAT  
COWBOY JACK CLEMENT.

THE HIP PEOPLE OF  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

HUNG OUT AT THAT BUILDING.

PEOPLE THOUGHT, "THEY'VE GOT  
SOMETHING GOING ON

AND THEY AIN'T GOT NO WINDOWS."

JENNINGS: "SINGING MY SONGS,  
AND ONE OF HIS NOW AND THEN "

"BUT I DON'T THINK  
HANK DONE IT THIS WAY, NO "

"I THINK HE DID IT  
LIKE HE WANTED TO, YEAH "

"

BENSON: I THINK EVERY GENERATION  
COMES UP WITH THEIR OWN SOUND.

MUSIC STARTS OUT RAW.

AND, AS IT GO,  
IT GETS MORE POLISHED,

MORE POLISHED, MORE POLISHED,

AND THE NEXT GENERATION  
COMES ALONG AND GOES,

"WE DON'T LIKE  
THAT SLICK STUFF."

AND IT BECOMES  
FUNKY AND RAW AGAIN.

NARRATOR: BY THE 1970s, WITH

COUNTRYPOLITAN RULING  
THE AIRWAVES,

ACOUSTIC STRING BAND MUSIC HAD

VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARED  
FROM COUNTRY RADIO.

BUT THERE WERE STILL  
PLENTY OF PEOPLE PLAYING IT.

STUART: BLUEGRASS FESTIVALS  
WERE DOING GREAT.

THE ROOTS OF IT WAS GREAT.

EVERYBODY THAT MATTERED  
WAS STILL MAKING

PLENTY OF GOOD MUSIC, THEY JUST

WEREN'T GETTING  
RECOGNIZED AS MUCH.

NARRATOR: MARTY STUART,  
STILL A TEENAGER,

WAS NOW OFFICIALLY PART  
OF LESTER FLATT'S BAND,

THE NASHVILLE GRASS.

ON OCCASIONS, HE ALSO TRAVELED

WITH BILL MONROE,  
THE PATRIARCH OF BLUEGRASS.

STUART: A LOT OF MY  
EARLY MANDOLIN EXPERIENCES

WERE JUST RIDING DOWN THE ROAD

AFTER SOME OF

THOSE SHOWS AT NIGHT

AND HIM JUST, US, SITTING THERE  
IN THE DARKNESS, YOU KNOW,

LOOKING AT THE TAIL LIGHTS  
TO THE BUS IN FRONT OF US,

PLAYING MUSIC.

AND HE KEPT HIS  
REGULAR MANDOLIN HERE,

AND SOMETIMES HE  
KEPT ONE OVER HERE

THAT WAS TUNED IN STRANGE  
TUNINGS VERY ANCIENT-SOUNDING.

HE CALLED THEM  
THE ANCIENT TONES.

AND HE WAS NEVER  
ONE OF THOSE GUYS TO SAY,

"LISTEN TO THIS TUNE."

HE WOULD, HE WOULD GO LIKE...  
[PLAYING MANDOLIN]

AND LOOK OFF AND I WAS  
SUPPOSED TO GO...

[PLAYING MANDOLIN]

AND WHEN I WOULD GET IT,  
HE'D MOVE ON.

AND, UH, WHEN I'D MISS IT, HE'D  
JUST KIND OF, UM, SHAKE HIS HEAD

AND RUN OFF AND DO  
SOMETHING ELSE.

AND IT WOULD KILL ME  
IF I COULDN'T KEEP UP.

NARRATOR: OTHER  
BLUEGRASS MUSICIANS

WERE ALSO COMING OF AGE.

RICKY SKAGGS WAS  
FROM THE MOUNTAINS

OF EASTERN KENTUCKY.

MAN: I'D STAND IN  
THE MIDDLE OF THE HOUSE,

AND I'D HEAR MOM AND DAD  
LISTENING TO

FLATT AND SCRUGGS  
OR RALPH STANLEY,

AND THEN I'D,  
I'D HEAR, YOU KNOW,

MY SISTER LISTENING  
TO THE BEATLES, UH, OVER HERE.

AND I WOULD STAND IN THE MIDDLE,  
AND IT'S LIKE

I WOULD HEAR TWO WORLDS  
GOING OFF AND ON.

BUT IT WAS, YOU KNOW,  
THE HARMONIES

THAT JOHN AND PAUL WERE DOING  
WAS NOT DIFFERENT

THAN WHAT RALPH  
AND CARTER WAS DOING.

TO ME, I COULD HEAR IT.

NARRATOR: LIKE MARTY STUART,  
SKAGGS HAD TAKEN UP THE MANDOLIN

AT AN EARLY AGE--AND HE  
WAS GOOD AT IT, TOO.

SKAGGS: I WAS 6 YEARS OLD.

I HAD ONLY BEEN PLAYING  
THE MANDOLIN ABOUT A YEAR.

AND, UH, BILL MONROE  
CAME TO MARTHA, KENTUCKY.

AND THAT NIGHT CHANGED MY LIFE.

SOME NEIGHBORS IN THE HOOD  
HAD STARTED, UH,

SHOUTING OUT TO MR. MONROE,  
"LET LITTLE RICKY SKAGGS

GET UP THERE AND SING ONE."

HE WAS NICE AND HE

KEPT ON DOING HIS SHOW.

SO, FINALLY, AFTER A COUPLE MORE  
HEE-HAWS FROM THE AUDIENCE,

WHY, I THINK HE WAS READY  
TO PUT A STOP TO IT,

SO HE INVITED  
"LITTLE RICKY SKAGGS"

TO COME UP ONSTAGE.

I DON'T THINK HE REALLY  
KNEW HOW LITTLE

RICKY SKAGGS WAS AT THE TIME.

HE TOOK HIS BIG F-5 SIZED  
MANDOLIN LIKE THIS

AND PUT THE STRAP  
AROUND THE CURL HERE

AND PUT IT ON ME WHEN HE  
FOUND OUT I PLAYED MANDOLIN.

YOU KNOW?  
AND WE PLAYED A SONG CALLED

"RUBY, ARE YOU MAD AT YOUR MAN?"

NOW, THAT IS A 6-YEAR-OLD  
HIT, RIGHT THERE. [LAUGHS]

â OH, RUBY, RUBY, HONEY,  
ARE YOU MAD AT YOUR MAN? â

â OH, RUBY

â RUBY

I NEVER KNEW WHAT  
SHE WAS MAD ABOUT. [LAUGHS]

[BANJO PLAYING]

NARRATOR: IN NORMAN, OKLAHOMA,

A YOUNG BANJO AND GUITAR PLAYER

NAMED VINCE GILL SWITCHED FROM

PLAYING ROCK AND ROLL  
IN HIGH SCHOOL

TO JOIN A BLUEGRASS BAND,

MOUNTAIN SMOKE.

THEY THOUGHT THEY HAD  
CAUGHT THEIR BIG BREAK

WHEN THEY WERE ASKED TO FILL IN  
AT THE LAST MINUTE

AS THE OPENING ACT AT  
A CONCERT IN OKLAHOMA CITY.

MAN: WE WENT DOWN TO THE  
CIVIC CENTER IN OKLAHOMA CITY

AND WE WERE GOING  
TO OPEN FOR KISS,

IN OUR LITTLE BLUEGRASS BAND.

AND YOU COULDN'T--  
YOU COULDN'T SCRIPT--

"SPINAL TAP" COULDN'T  
SCRIPT THIS, YOU KNOW?

THEY HAD THEIR  
30-FOOT DRUM RISERS

AND STACKS OF AMPLIFIERS  
TO THE CEILING

AND DEATH AND FIRE  
AND ALL OF THIS STUFF.

WE COME OUT THERE WITH OUR

LITTLE FIDDLES  
AND OUR MANDOLINS.

[IMITATES FIDDLE]  
[LAUGHS]

THESE PEOPLE FLIPPED  
COMPLETELY OUT.

THEY HATED US SO BAD.

THEY STARTED BOOING FROM  
THE FIRST NOTE AND SCREAMING,

AND I MUST SAY, IT WAS  
KIND OF A NEAT FEELING,

HAVING THAT MANY PEOPLE  
PISSSED OFF AT YOU,

AND SCREAMING AT YOU, THAT

IT WAS LIKE A BIG ROOMFUL  
OF APPLAUSE IN A WEIRD WAY.

WE ONLY LASTED ABOUT 3 SONGS,

AND THEN THE BEER BOTTLES  
STARTED FLYING,

AND WE SAID, "WELL,  
WE BETTER GET OUT OF HERE."

SO, I TURNED AROUND  
AND FLIPPED THEM OFF

AND TOLD THEM TO KISS MY ASS.

AND THE NEXT DAY, THERE WAS  
A REVIEW IN THE PAPER

AND IT SAID, "GROUP MEMBER  
VINCE GILL ON HIS DEPARTURE

"SHOWED THE CROWD  
WHICH PART OF HIS ANATOMY

THE CROWD COULD KISS,"

IN THEIR BLOCK LETTERS, THAT  
WAS THEIR LOGO. [LAUGHS]

NARRATOR: MEANWHILE,  
LESTER FLATT  
AND THE NASHVILLE GRASS

FOUND THEMSELVES PLAYING  
ON THE SAME STAGE

WITH THE JAZZ PIANIST  
CHICK COREA

AND THE FUNK BAND  
KOOL AND THE GANG.

STUART: I REMEMBER  
PUTTING MY HEAD DOWN

ON THE BUNK IN THE BUS, GOING,

"THEY'RE GOING TO LAUGH US  
OFF OF THE STAGE."

BUT WE WENT OUT THERE  
IN THAT TRADITIONAL DRESS,

ALL THESE OLD GUYS,  
AND ME, AS A YOUNGSTER,

AND THE MOVIE "DELIVERANCE"  
WAS PRETTY HOT AT THE TIME.

AND, UNKNOWNLY, LESTER HAD  
ALWAYS DONE "DUELING BANJOS"

AS A PART OF HIS SHOW  
FOR YEARS.

IT WAS ON THE NEW RECORD.

SO, IT WAS JUST SIMPLY  
ONE OF THE INSTRUMENTALS

THAT WAS PLAYED THAT NIGHT.

[PLAYING "DUELING BANJOS"]

[APPLAUSE]

WELL, THAT UNLOCKED,  
AND WE ENCORED.

AND AT THE END OF THE NIGHT,  
WE HAD ENCORED 9 TIMES.

AND THE NEXT DAY,  
LESTER'S MANAGER

BOOKED 72 COLLEGE SHOWS  
AND ROCK SHOWS

OFF OF THAT ONE  
30-MINUTE PERFORMANCE.

[CHEERING AND APPLAUSE]

AND THE NEXT THING I KNOW,  
WE GO FROM BEING

A TIRED, OLD OPRY BAND THAT'S  
PLAYING "MOM AND POP" SHOWS

AND, YOU KNOW,  
BLUEGRASS FESTIVALS

TO WE WERE ROCK STARS.

NARRATOR: ONE OF THEIR  
FIRST SHOWS WAS

AT MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY.

THE CONCERT THAT  
NIGHT FEATURED



AN UP-AND-COMING  
ROCK GROUP, THE EAGLES,

AND A FORMER MEMBER OF  
THE BYRDS, GRAM PARSONS,

WHO HAD BROUGHT  
ALONG A NEW HARMONY SINGER,

EMMYLOU HARRIS.

HARRIS: HE WAS PASSIONATE ABOUT  
REAL COUNTRY MUSIC,

THE REAL WASHED  
IN THE BLOOD STUFF.

BUT HE WAS ALSO A CHILD  
OF THE SIXTIES.

ROCK AND ROLL WAS ALSO  
A PASSION OF HIS.

HE KIND OF HAD ONE FOOT  
IN BOTH WORLDS.

HE REALLY BELIEVED THAT YOU  
COULD BRING THE TWO TOGETHER.

THE FLYING BURRITO BROTHERS:  
"SHE'S TELLING DIRTY LIES..."

NARRATOR: BACK IN 1968, PARSONS  
HAD COME TO NASHVILLE

AND RECORDED THE ALBUM  
"SWEETHEART OF THE RODEO"  
WITH THE BYRDS.

IN CALIFORNIA,  
HE AND CHRIS HILLMAN

PUT TOGETHER A NEW BAND,  
THE FLYING BURRITO BROTHERS.

THE FLYING BURRITO BROTHERS:  
"UNHAPPINESS HAS BEEN

HER CLOSE COMPANION

HER WORLD IS FULL OF  
JEALOUSY AND DOUBT"

IT GETS HER OFF TO SEE  
A PERSON CRYING"

â SHE'S JUST THE KIND THAT  
YOU CAN'T DO WITHOUT... â

BENSON: THE MUSIC THAT WAS  
GOING ON IN CALIFORNIA,

IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA,  
WAS THE BYRDS

AND THE FLYING BURRITO  
BROTHERS.

IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA,

THE GRATEFUL DEAD  
HAD A SPINOFF BAND,

THE NEW RIDERS  
OF THE PURPLE SAGE.

THERE WAS COMMANDER CODY.

THERE WAS THIS INCREDIBLE  
CROSSING OF PEOPLE

VERY INTERESTED IN THE  
ROOTS OF COUNTRY MUSIC

AND FOLK MUSIC  
AND ROCK AND ROLL

AND HOW IT ALL  
FIT TOGETHER.

NARRATOR: AS A SELF-APPOINTED  
APOSTLE OF THE FUSION

HE CALLED  
COSMIC AMERICAN MUSIC,

PARSONS BECAME FRIENDS WITH  
THE ROLLING STONES

AND HELPED INFLUENCE  
THE CREATION OF THEIR  
SONG, "WILD HORSES."

PARSONS' NEXT PROSPECT FOR  
CONVERSION TO COUNTRY MUSIC

WAS EMMYLOU HARRIS.

EXCEPT FOR JOHNNY CASH,

I COULDN'T BE FOOLED WITH  
COUNTRY MUSIC.

FOLK MUSIC WAS  
WHAT REALLY SPOKE TO ME.

â CALLIOPE CALLING,  
CHILDREN ARE FALLING â

â IN LINE TO RIDE ON  
THE MERRY-GO-ROUND â

â PEOPLE ARE PASSING,  
CHILDREN ARE LAUGHING â

â THEY WANT TO RIDE ON  
THE MERRY-GO-ROUND â

â DOESN'T MATTER  
WHEN YOU CAME â

â EVERY RIDE IS  
JUST THE SAME â

â DO NOT WORRY  
HOW IT'S DONE â

â THERE IS ROOM  
FOR EVERYONE... â

NARRATOR: BORN IN BIRMINGHAM,  
ALABAMA AND RAISED IN VIRGINIA,

HARRIS DROPPED OUT OF COLLEGE,  
GOT MARRIED,

HAD A BABY, THEN A DIVORCE.

SHE HAD BOUNCED AROUND  
THE EAST COAST FOLK SCENE

FOR SEVERAL YEARS WHEN ONE OF  
THE BURRITO BROTHERS

HEARD HER PERFORMING AT  
A SMALL CLUB IN SUBURBAN  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

AND TOLD PARSONS ABOUT  
HER REMARKABLE VOICE.

â OOH

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]

GRAM PARSONS:  
â LOVE HURTS

â LOVE SCARS...

NARRATOR: A YEAR LATER,  
AS PARSONS PREPARED

TO RECORD HIS FIRST  
SOLO ALBUM,

HE SENT HARRIS A PLANE TICKET  
FOR LOS ANGELES,

AND THEY BEGAN REHEARSALS,

WHICH INCLUDED HIS TUTORIALS ON  
THE MUSIC HE LOVED,

LIKE MELODIES WRITTEN BY  
FELICE AND BOUDLEAUX BRYANT

OR THE TIGHT HARMONIES OF  
THE INFLUENTIAL GOSPEL

AND COUNTRY DUO,  
THE LOUVIN BROTHERS.

PARSONS: "TAKE A LOT  
OF PAIN..."

HARRIS: IT WAS A VERY  
INTENSE MUSICAL LEARNING  
EXPERIENCE FOR ME.

PARSONS: "LOVE HURTS..."

HARRIS: I HAD NO IDEA WHO  
THE LOUVIN BROTHERS WERE.

THEY HAD THESE WONDERFUL  
HARMONIES.

THERE'S SUCH A TENSION  
IN THE VOICES

THAT YOU FEEL LIKE  
YOU'RE STARTING TO VIBRATE.

PARSONS: "MMM,  
LOVE HURTS"

I BECAME A BIG FAN OF  
THE LOUVIN BROTHERS

AND STARTED TRYING TO TRACK DOWN  
THEIR RECORDS.

PARSONS: "I'M YOUNG..."

NARRATOR: HARRIS' OWN  
EXQUISITELY TENDER HARMONIES

ADDED THE SPECIAL ELEMENT  
PARSONS HAD BEEN SEARCHING FOR,

AND THEY WENT ON TOUR TO  
PROMOTE THE RESULT.

PARSONS AND HARRIS:  
â€” I KNOW PAIN

â€” OR TWO...

HARRIS: I HAD FINALLY  
DISCOVERED WHO I WAS

AS A SINGER FROM  
SINGING WITH HIM

AND BECOMING THIS HUGE  
COUNTRY MUSIC CONVERT.

PARSONS: â€” I REALLY  
LEARNED A LOT... â€”

I FINALLY FELT I HAD FOUND

WHERE I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE  
AS A SINGER.

I FELT LIKE  
I WAS A SINGER

WHO WAS COMING THROUGH  
THE COUNTRY MUSIC DOOR.

PARSONS AND HARRIS:  
â€” ...HURTS

â€” MMM, LOVE HURTS

STUART: THAT NIGHT  
AT MICHIGAN STATE

WAS THE FIRST TIME I EVER  
SAW ROCK AND ROLL

AND BLUEGRASS AND HONKY-TONK  
AND FOLK MUSIC

AND GOSPEL MUSIC COLLIDE.

AND SHE WAS DEAD  
CENTER OF EVERY BIT OF IT,

LIKE SPARKS WERE FLYING  
OFF OF HER AS MUCH AS  
THEY WERE ANYBODY.

AND I REMEMBER THINKING IT CAN  
ALL EXIST

UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF  
COUNTRY MUSIC.

PARSONS AND HARRIS:  
â€”a LOVE HURTS

â€”a THEY CALL IT THAT  
OL' MOUNTAIN DEW â€”a

â€”a LORD, LORD, AND THEM  
THAT REFUSE IT ARE FEW â€”a

â€”a I'M GONNA HUSH UP  
MY MUG â€”a

â€”a IF YOU'LL JUST  
FILL UP MY JUG â€”a

â€”a WITH THAT GOOD  
OL' MOUNTAIN DEW â€”a

â€”a WELL, NOW, MY UNCLE MORT,  
HE'S SAWED OFF AND HE'S SHORT â€”a

â€”a AND HE MEASURES  
ABOUT 4-FOOT-TWO â€”a

â€”a BUT HE THINKS HE'S A GIANT  
WHEN YOU GIVE HIM A PINT â€”a

â€”a OF THAT GOOD OL'  
MOUNTAIN DEW â€”a

â€”a WELL, THEY CALL IT  
THAT OL' MOUNTAIN DEW â€”a

â€”a LORD, LORD, AND THEM  
THAT REFUSE IT ARE FEW â€”a

â€”a I'LL HUSH UP MY MUG  
IF YOU FILL UP MY JUG â€”a

â€”a WITH THAT GOOD OL'  
MOUNTAIN DEW â€”a

PLAY IT, JODY.

MAN: I TELL PEOPLE, "WILLIE'S  
NOT FROM AROUND HERE."

I MEAN EARTH.

BENSON: OBVIOUSLY, HIS VOICE

IS DIFFERENT.

WHEN I FIRST MOVED  
TO TEXAS, PEOPLE WOULD SAY,

"THAT WILLIE NELSON SINGS  
THROUGH HIS NOSE." YOU KNOW?

YEAH, IT'S A HELL OF A NOSE.

â€œ WE CALL IT THAT OL'  
MOUNTAIN DEW, LORD, LORD â€œ

â€œ AND THEM THAT REFUSE IT  
ARE FEW... â€œ

WE REALLY DIDN'T THINK THAT  
WILLIE COULD EVER BREAK THROUGH

TO THE MAINSTREAM 'CAUSE  
HE WAS TOO DIFFERENT.

HE WAS TOO GOOD  
AND TOO DIFFERENT.

AND THE STUFF THAT MADE IT

IN THE MAINSTREAM WAS NOT  
DIFFERENT.

NELSON: â€œ THAT GOOD OL'  
MOUNTAIN DEW â€œ

AND THEN THE  
MAINSTREAM FOUND OUT.

[CHUCKLES]

AND THEN IT GOT REALLY NUTS.

NARRATOR: IN 1972,

AFTER 10 DISCOURAGING  
YEARS IN NASHVILLE,

WILLIE NELSON HAD  
RETURNED HOME TO TEXAS.

IN AUSTIN, HE DISCOVERED  
AN EMERGING MUSIC SCENE

THAT SEEMED TO HIM MUCH MORE  
FREEWHEELING

THAN THE NASHVILLE HE KNEW,

LESS CONCERNED ABOUT

LABELING MUSIC

AND MORE WELCOMING TO OFFBEAT  
ARTISTS LIKE HIMSELF.

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL:  
"I WAS BORN IN LOUISIANA...

NARRATOR: ITS FOCAL POINT WAS  
AN OLD NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY

JUST ACROSS THE COLORADO RIVER  
FROM DOWNTOWN AUSTIN,

A PLACE CALLED  
ARMADILLO WORLD HEADQUARTERS,

WHERE LIVE MUSIC RANGED FROM  
B.B. KING,

JERRY JEFF WALKER,  
AND TAJ MAHAL

TO FRANK ZAPPA,

THE FLYING BURRITO BROTHERS,  
COMMANDER CODY,

AND RAY BENSON AND HIS BAND,  
ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL.

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL:  
"I SAW MILES AND MILES...

BENSON: WE PLAYED  
AT THE ARMADILLO

AND IT WAS LIKE,  
"THIS IS IT. IT'S HEAVEN.

WE FOUND HEAVEN ON EARTH."

PEOPLE OUR AGE  
LOVE OUR MUSIC.

THEY HAVE BEER.

THERE WERE  
COLLEGE GIRLS TO CHASE.

RENT WAS \$100 A MONTH.

AND POT WAS CHEAP.

WE NEEDED MONEY,

BUT WE WERE NOT MOTIVATED JUST



BY MAKING MONEY.

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL:  
"...TILL I DIE

BUT IT WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAT  
WE HAD THE FREEDOM.

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]

NELSON: "WHISKEY RIVER,  
TAKE MY MIND..."

NARRATOR: WILLIE NELSON WAS  
NEARLY A GENERATION OLDER

THAN MOST OF THE PATRONS,

AND THE OTHER MUSICIANS,  
AT THE ARMADILLO,

BUT FROM HIS FIRST  
APPEARANCE ON ITS STAGE,

THEY FELL IN LOVE WITH HIM.

NELSON: "...TAKE CARE OF ME

BENSON: HE WAS ON A PERSONAL  
JOURNEY TO PLAY

THE MUSIC AND  
CREATE THE MUSIC

AND BECOME THE PERSON THAT HE  
WAS GOING TO BECOME.

NELSON: "DON'T LET HER MEMORY  
TORTURE ME..."

BENSON: THIS WAS A TOWN THAT  
ALLOWED HIM TO DO THAT.

HE LET HIS HAIR GROW.

HE SAID, "THEY DON'T NEED ME  
TO WEAR A SUIT

AND A TIE AND A TURTLENECK  
OR WHATEVER."

NARRATOR: NELSON COULD SENSE  
FROM THE STRANGE MIXTURE

OF PEOPLE SHOWING UP THAT  
SOMETHING NEW WAS HAPPENING.

HE CALLED HIS FRIEND WAYLON  
JENNINGS IN NASHVILLE.

SMITH: WILLIE SAID, "WAYLON,  
I'VE GOT PREACHERS AND PILGRIMS

"AND POETS, POOR PEOPLE,

"HILLBILLIES,  
COLLEGE GRADUATES.

"THEY'RE ALL SITTING  
SIDE-BY-SIDE

"WATCHING ME PLAY  
MY SONGS AND SING MY MUSIC.

YOU NEED TO COME DOWN HERE  
AND SEE WHAT'S GOING ON."

NARRATOR: JENNINGS SOON BECAME  
A REGULAR

AT WILLIE'S ANNUAL  
FOURTH OF JULY PICNICS,

WHERE LONG-HAIRED  
COLLEGE STUDENTS

AND REDNECK TRUCK DRIVERS  
PARTIED TOGETHER.

THEY'RE OUT THERE  
DRINKING BEER, SMOKING POT,

AND FINDING OUT THAT THEY  
REALLY DIDN'T HATE EACH OTHER.

WILLIE'S PICNICS.

THE MOST DISORGANIZED GATHERING  
OF THE TRIBES.

I DON'T KNOW HOW  
TO DESCRIBE THEM EXCEPT CHAOS.

NOBODY WAS IN CHARGE.

NOBODY KNEW WHAT  
WAS GOING ON.

WILLIE WOULD LOSE MONEY  
EVERY TIME.

BUT THE PEOPLE WOULD SHOW UP.

I DON'T KNOW, 20,000, 30,000

PEOPLE, BUT WHO PAID?

IT WAS LIKE WOODSTOCK.  
NOBODY PAID, YOU KNOW.

LONE STAR BEER WOULD  
SPONSOR EVERYTHING.

WE DIDN'T CARE.

NELSON: "YOU'RE ALL I GOT,  
TAKE CARE OF ME"

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]

NELSON: "IN THE TWILIGHT GLOW  
I SEE THEM"

"BLUE EYES CRYING  
IN THE RAIN..."

NARRATOR: WHEN NELSON SIGNED  
A NEW CONTRACT

WITH COLUMBIA RECORDS,

HE NEGOTIATED THE SAME  
TERMS WAYLON JENNINGS GOT

AND IMMEDIATELY WENT TO WORK

ON HIS NEXT ALBUM,  
"RED HEADED STRANGER,"

A COLLECTION OF HAUNTING SONGS  
THAT TOGETHER TELL THE STORY

OF A MAN WHO KILLS HIS  
UNFAITHFUL WIFE AND HER LOVER,

THEN RIDES OFF  
ACROSS THE WEST,

GRIEVING  
AND SEEKING REDEMPTION.

NELSON: "ONLY MEMORIES  
REMAIN"

"AND THROUGH THE AGES  
I REMEMBER..."

NARRATOR: NELSON CHOSE  
A SMALL STUDIO

NEAR DALLAS TO MAKE  
THE ALBUM

BECAUSE HE THOUGHT HIS PREVIOUS  
RECORDS HAD BEEN OVER-PRODUCED.

NELSON: IF YOU WANT  
TO KNOW THE TRUTH,

I THINK MONEY WAS  
THE BOTTOM LINE.

THERE'S NO MONEY TO BE SPLIT UP  
IF YOU GO AHEAD AND DO--

TAKE 3 GUYS  
AND DO AN ALBUM.

YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE  
STRINGS AND VOICES AND HORNS,

AND SO THERE'S HUNDREDS  
OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS

IN THE RECORD BEFORE  
YOU GET IT OUT,

WHICH ALSO MEANS YOU'RE NEVER  
GOING TO GET A QUARTER OUT OF IT

'CAUSE IT'S ALL TIED  
UP IN THE BEGINNING.

NARRATOR: NELSON SPENT  
ONLY \$4,000 RECORDING  
"RED HEADED STRANGER"

AND GOT THE SIMPLE, UNVARNISHED  
SOUND HE WAS LOOKING FOR,

HIS SINGULAR VOICE UNTOUCHED BY  
ANY ENGINEERING TRICKS,

AND THE SPAREST BACK-UP  
INSTRUMENTATION,

INCLUDING HIS OWN IDIOSYNCRATIC  
GUITAR PLAYING.

NELSON: â€œ BLUE EYES CRYING...

NARRATOR: COLUMBIA RECORDS  
DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF IT.

MAN: WE ALL WERE IN AGREEMENT

THAT IT WAS A POOR,  
LOUSY-SOUNDING RECORD.

THEY SAID, "WE CAN'T PUT  
THIS OUT."

I SAID, "WELL, I AGREE.

IT'S THIS TOTAL--SOUNDS LIKE  
A BAD DEMO."

I SAID, "LET'S DO THIS.

"LET'S APPEASE WILLIE BY  
RELEASING THE RECORD.

"IT'LL DIE A QUICK DEATH.

"THAT WAY HE'LL BE  
MORE RECEPTIVE

TO WHAT EVERYBODY  
WANTS HIM TO DO."

SO WE PUT IT OUT.

AND WE WERE WRONG AS HELL.

A BIG, BIG RECORD.

AND, AFTER THAT, EVERYBODY LEFT  
WILLIE ALONE, INCLUDING ME.

NARRATOR: THE ALBUM ATTRACTED  
NEAR UNIVERSAL ACCLAIM.

NELSON: "A RED HEADED STRANGER  
FOR BLUE ROCK, MONTANA"

"RODE INTO TOWN ONE DAY...

NARRATOR: ONE REVIEWER CALLED IT  
A MASTERPIECE.

ANOTHER COMPARED  
NELSON'S UNSENTIMENTAL  
STYLE TO HEMINGWAY'S.

AND IT SOLD STEADILY,  
STAYING ON THE CHARTS

FOR AN UNPRECEDENTED  
120 WEEKS.

NELSON: "...LIKE THUNDER

"HIS LIPS, THEY WERE  
SAD AND TIGHT"

NARRATOR: IN TEXAS,

WILLIE AND HIS BAND

SEEMED TO BE EVERYWHERE--

PERFORMING AT A FUNDRAISER FOR  
A HOUSTON RADIO STATION

AFTER IT WAS FIREBOMBED  
BY THE KKK,

DRAWING 10,000 PEOPLE  
TO A CONCERT

IN HIS TINY HOMETOWN OF  
ABBOTT,

AND DOING THE PILOT SHOW

FOR HIS ADOPTED CITY'S  
PUBLIC TELEVISION STATION,

EXPERIMENTING ON THE IDEA OF  
AN HOUR-LONG PROGRAM DEVOTED

EXCLUSIVELY TO ONE ARTIST'S  
LIVE PERFORMANCES.

"AUSTIN CITY LIMITS" WOULD GO  
ON TO BECOME

THE LONGEST-RUNNING MUSIC  
PROGRAM IN TELEVISION HISTORY.

NELSON: "IF HE SHOULD  
PASS YOUR WAY..."

NARRATOR:  
ONLY A FEW YEARS EARLIER,

DRUNK AND DESPAIRING  
OVER HIS CAREER,

NELSON HAD SPRAWLED OUT  
IN THE MIDDLE OF BROADWAY  
IN NASHVILLE.

NOW "NEWSWEEK" MAGAZINE CALLED  
HIM "THE KING OF COUNTRY MUSIC"

AND "ROLLING STONE" PUT HIM  
ON ITS COVER.

NELSON: "DON'T FIGHT IT,  
DON'T SPITE IT"

"JUST WAIT TILL TOMORROW

â MAYBE HE'LL RIDE ON  
AGAIN â

HARRIS: â I DON'T WANT TO HEAR  
A LOVE SONG â

â I GOT ON THIS AIRPLANE  
JUST TO FLY â

â AND I KNOW THERE'S  
LIFE BELOW ME â

â BUT ALL THAT IT CAN...

NARRATOR: EMMYLOU HARRIS'  
COLLABORATION WITH GRAM PARSONS

ENDED TRAGICALLY AND SUDDENLY  
WHEN HE DIED AT AGE 26

OF AN ALCOHOL  
AND DRUG OVERDOSE.

HARRIS: â I DON'T WANT  
TO HEAR A SAD STORY... â

NARRATOR:  
HIS DEATH, SHE SAID,

"WAS LIKE  
FALLING OFF A MOUNTAIN."

HARRIS: â FULL OF HEARTBREAK  
AND DESIRE... â

I DIDN'T REALLY KNOW  
WHAT I WAS DOING.

I KNEW THAT I WANTED TO MAKE  
A COUNTRY RECORD,

ALMOST LIKE IN MEMORY  
OF GRAM.

â ...AND THE CANYON  
WAS ON FIRE â

â I WOULD ROCK MY SOUL

â IN THE BOSOM OF ABRAHAM...

THE SIMPLICITY OF  
COUNTRY MUSIC

IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT  
THINGS ABOUT IT.

IT'S ABOUT THE STORY AND  
THE MELODY AND THE SOUND

AND THE VOICE  
AND THE SINCERITY OF IT.

â FROM BOULDER  
TO BIRMINGHAM... â

CROWELL: WHEN THEY HEAR  
HER VOICE,

THEY FEEL LIKE THEY'VE  
BEEN TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL.

HARRIS: â I COULD SEE  
YOUR FACE â

â IF I THOUGHT I COULD SEE

â I COULD SEE...

IT JUST SOMEHOW  
GETS PAST EVERYTHING

AND WINDS UP  
SOMEWHERE IN YOUR HEART.

AND IT FEELS GOOD IN THERE.

NARRATOR: IN 1975, HARRIS CAME  
OUT WITH TWO SOLO ALBUMS.

HARRIS: â IF I COULD ONLY  
WIN YOUR LOVE... â

NARRATOR: SHE FILLED THEM WITH  
SONGS DRAWN FROM THE LESSONS

IN COUNTRY MUSIC THAT PARSONS  
HAD PROVIDED--

MERLE HAGGARD'S "TONIGHT  
THE BOTTLE LET ME DOWN,"

DOLLY PARTON'S  
"COAT OF MANY COLORS,"

GEORGE JONES'  
"ONE OF THESE DAYS,"

HANK WILLIAMS'  
"JAMBALAYA," AND OTHERS.

HARRIS: â I'D GIVE MY ALL  
TO MAKE IT LIVE â



â YOU'LL NEVER KNOW  
HOW MUCH I'D GIVE â

â IF I COULD ONLY WIN  
YOUR LOVE... â

NARRATOR:  
RELEASED AS A SINGLE,

HER VERSION OF AN OLD LOUVIN  
BROTHERS SONG,

"IF I COULD ONLY  
WIN YOUR LOVE,"

WENT TO NUMBER 4  
ON THE COUNTRY CHARTS,

THEN HER RENDITIONS OF  
BUCK OWENS' "TOGETHER AGAIN"

AND PATSY CLINE'S "SWEET DREAMS"  
BOTH REACHED NUMBER ONE.

HARRIS: â ...WIN YOUR LOVE...

NARRATOR: ONE REVIEWER, NOTING  
HER BACKGROUND IN FOLK MUSIC

AND THAT SHE WAS BASED  
IN LOS ANGELES,

NEVERTHELESS DECLARED  
THAT HER MUSIC WAS

"MORE COUNTRY THAN NASHVILLE."

HARRIS: â ...LOVE

WHEN I BECAME A CONVERT  
TO COUNTRY MUSIC,

THERE'S NO OTHER  
WORD FOR IT,

I BECAME OBNOXIOUS,

TRYING TO GET PEOPLE TO LISTEN  
TO EVERYTHING.

NARRATOR: SHE SURROUNDED  
HERSELF WITH SOME OF

THE LEADING ROCK  
INSTRUMENTALISTS  
ON THE WEST COAST.

THEY WERE CALLED  
THE HOT BAND.

HARRIS: "MADE ME PUT MY  
MONEY IN THE BANK, BABY "

" STRAIGHTEN DOWN...

NARRATOR: THE ONE SHE BECAME  
CLOSEST TO WAS RODNEY CROWELL.

AFTER HEARING SOME  
OF HIS SONGS,

HARRIS HAD INVITED HIM  
TO CALIFORNIA TO WORK  
ON HER ALBUMS.

HARRIS: RODNEY WAS KIND OF LIKE  
MY KID BROTHER.

WE WERE THE SAME KIND OF SORT OF  
QUASI-HIPPIE KIDS,

BUT WE HAD TOTALLY DIFFERENT  
UPBRINGINGS.

HE GREW UP WITH COUNTRY MUSIC.

HARRIS: "PARTY JUST STARTED,  
LORD, I'M DRUNK ON "

" BLUEBIRD WINE

" AND IT'S...

HE WAS KIND OF MY PARTNER IN  
THIS WONDERFUL CRIME

OF MAKING COUNTRY MUSIC  
OUTSIDE THE LINES

BUT WITH TOTAL RESPECT FOR THE  
TRADITION OF COUNTRY MUSIC.

" WINE

CROWELL: SO, WE JUST TOOK  
TRADITIONAL COUNTRY MUSIC

AND SOUTHERN ROCK AND ROLL  
AND ROCKABILLY

AND JUST PLAYED IT,

YOU KNOW, AND JUST LET IT HAVE  
ITS VOICE.

AND IT WAS GOOD FUN.

âa WELL, GOOD-BYE, JOE,  
WE GOTTA GO âa

âa ME, OH, MY, OH

âa ME GOTTA GO POLE THE PIROGUE  
DOWN THE BAYOU âa

âa MY YVONNE,  
THE SWEETEST ONE âa

âa ME, OH, MY, OH

âa SON OF A GUN, GONNA HAVE  
BIG FUN ON THE BAYOU âa

âa WELL, THE JAMBALAYA  
AND CRAWFISH PIE âa

âa AND A FILLET GUMBO

âa 'CAUSE TONIGHT I'M  
GONNA SEE âa

âa MY MACHEZ AMIO...

NARRATOR:  
WITH THE HOT BAND,

HARRIS PLAYED IN EVERY TYPE  
OF VENUE,

FROM THE PALOMINO CLUB  
IN NORTH HOLLYWOOD

TO ARMADILLO WORLD HEADQUARTERS  
IN AUSTIN.

THEY WERE THE OPENING ACT FOR  
FOLK AND POP STAR JAMES TAYLOR,

AS WELL AS MERLE HAGGARD,

AND FOR THE 60,000 FANS  
WHO CAME TO HEAR

ELTON JOHN AT DODGER STADIUM.

âa FOUNTAINEAUX,  
THE PLACE IS BUZZIN' âa

âa KINFOLK COME TO...

MAN: EMMYLOU HARRIS WAS

A LONE VOICE.

EMMYLOU DIDN'T EXPLODE  
ONTO THE SCENE,

SHE BLOOMED.

AND SHE'LL FOREVER  
BE THAT ROSE

THAT BLOOMED INTO OUR  
COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

AND OUR MUSICAL CONSCIOUSNESS.

â€” ...AND A FILLET GUMBO

WHOO!

â€” TONIGHT I'M GONNA SEE  
MY MACHEZ AMIO â€”

â€” PICK GUITAR,  
FILL UP A JAR â€”

â€” AND BE GAY-OH

â€” SON OF A GUN,  
WE'LL HAVE BIG FUN â€”

â€” ON THE BAYOU

NARRATOR: DURING A WHIRLWIND  
VISIT TO NASHVILLE,

SHE WAS ASKED TO JUDGE A TALENT  
CONTEST AT THE EXIT/IN,

THEN PERFORMED  
AT THE 50th ANNIVERSARY SHOW

OF THE GRAND OLE OPRY.

SHE PROVIDED VOCAL BACKUP ON  
A GUY CLARK ALBUM

AND RECORDED TOWNES VAN ZANDT'S  
SONG "PANCHO AND LEFTY."

â€” JAMBALAYA, A-CRAWFISH PIE

â€” AND A FILLET GUMBO...

NARRATOR: HER LABEL WANTED HER  
TO CROSS OVER

TO MORE MAINSTREAM MUSIC.

INSTEAD, SHE CAME OUT WITH  
TWO ALBUMS TINGED

WITH BLUEGRASS  
FEATURING RICKY SKAGGS.

"ROLLING STONE" MAGAZINE  
HAILED HER MUSIC

AS "COUNTRY WITHOUT CORN."

EVERYONE SEEMED TO LOVE  
EMMYLOU HARRIS.

â€” ON THE BAYOU

YEE-HEE!

THANK YOU. THE HOT BAND.  
THANK YOU.

I TELL YOU, THIS SURE BEATS  
THE RED FOX INN

IN BETHESDA, MARYLAND.

JENNINGS: â€” LOW DOWN  
LEAVING SUN â€”

â€” DONE DID EVERYTHING  
THAT NEEDS DONE... â€”

SMITH: THEY WANTED THEIR MUSIC  
TO SOUND ON RECORD

LIKE IT SOUNDED WHEN THEY STOOD  
ON THE STAGE AND SUNG IT.

THAT'S ALL IT WAS ABOUT.

NARRATOR: HAZEL SMITH WAS  
THE OFFICE MANAGER

AT HILLBILLY CENTRAL  
IN NASHVILLE,

WHERE WAYLON JENNINGS  
AND HIS FRIENDS

WERE NOW TURNING OUT  
HIT AFTER HIT.

REPORTERS STARTED ASKING HER  
HOW TO DESCRIBE THE MUSIC

JENNINGS, WILLIE NELSON,

AND OTHERS WERE CREATING.

SMITH: IN MY MIND, I THOUGHT  
EVERYTHING NEEDED

A TITLE FOR IT TO HAPPEN.

SO I ALWAYS DID,  
AND STILL DO,

HAVE A DICTIONARY  
UNDER MY DESK.

ONE DAY, I REACHED UNDER THERE  
AND I PULLED IT OUT

AND JUST WENT THROUGH IT  
AND CAME TO THE WORD "OUTLAW."

AND IT WAS ABOUT THAT  
MUCH INFORMATION THERE  
THAT MEANT VERY LITTLE,

BUT THE LAST SENTENCE  
SAID IT ALL.

AND HERE'S WHAT IT SAID--

"LIVING ON THE OUTSIDE OF  
THE WRITTEN LAW."

AND I LEANED BACK IN  
MY CHAIR AND I WENT...

I SAID, "THAT'S IT."

THEY ARE NOT GOING ALONG WITH  
THE NASHVILLE ESTABLISHMENT.

THEY'RE DOING  
THEIR OWN THING

AND THEY'RE DOING IT THE WAY  
THEY WANT TO.

JENNINGS: "WHERE DOES IT GO?

"THE GOOD LORD ONLY KNOWS

"SEEMS LIKE IT WAS JUST  
THE OTHER DAY..."

SMITH: THAT'S WHY OUTLAW MUSIC  
WAS BORN, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

THAT WAS WHAT OUTLAW MUSIC WAS  
RIGHT THERE.

AND IF ANYBODY TELLS YOU  
ANYTHING ELSE,

SAY, "YOU'RE A LIAR.

"THE WOMAN THAT NAMED IT OUTLAW  
MUSIC LOOKED AT ME IN THE FACE

AND SHE KNEW  
WHAT SHE DID AND KNEW WHY."

JENNINGS: " ...ANOTHER WAY  
TO BE... "

NARRATOR: MEANWHILE, EXECUTIVES  
AT RCA SAW AN OPPORTUNITY

TO INEXPENSIVELY CASH IN ON  
THE OUTLAW MYSTIQUE.

JENNINGS: " ...HERO LIKE ME,  
YEAH "

NARRATOR: IN THEIR VAULTS,

THEY HAD SOME UNRELEASED  
RECORDINGS OF JENNINGS',

ALONG WITH SONGS  
PERFORMED BY WILLIE NELSON

AND WAYLON'S WIFE  
JESSI COLTER,

AND DECIDED TO PUT THEM TOGETHER  
INTO A NEW ALBUM.

AT JENNINGS' INSISTENCE,

THEY ADDED SOME TRACKS BY  
TOMPALL GLASER,

THE OWNER OF  
HILLBILLY CENTRAL,

AND CALLED THE COMPILATION  
ALBUM

"WANTED! THE OUTLAWS."

JENNINGS: " A LONG TIME  
FORGOTTEN "

" ARE DREAMS THAT JUST FELL  
BY THE WAY "

â THE GOOD LIFE HE PROMISED

â AIN'T WHAT SHE'S  
LIVING TODAY â

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]

WILLIE.

NELSON: â BUT SHE NEVER  
COMPLAINS OF THE BAD TIMES... â

NARRATOR: THE ALBUM ROSE TO  
THE TOP OF THE COUNTRY CHARTS,

CROSSED OVER TO THE TOP 10  
ON POP CHARTS,

AND, AFTER SELLING  
A MILLION COPIES,

BECAME THE FIRST CERTIFIED  
PLATINUM ALBUM IN  
COUNTRY MUSIC HISTORY.

JENNINGS AND NELSON:  
â SHE'S A GOOD-HEARTED WOMAN

â IN LOVE WITH  
A GOOD-TIMING MAN... â

NARRATOR: THEN IT SOLD  
A MILLION MORE.

THE JENNINGS-NELSON DUET ON  
"GOOD HEARTED WOMAN,"

WHICH THEY HAD WRITTEN YEARS  
EARLIER DURING A POKER GAME,

BECAME A NUMBER-ONE SINGLE.

SMITH: MY GOD, THAT WAS A SONG  
WORTH SINGING, WASN'T IT?

I MEAN, YOU AIN'T GOT NO SONGS  
LIKE THAT

COMING OUT OF THIS  
HILLBILLY TOWN NOW.

A "GOOD HEARTED WOMAN"?

AIN'T NOBODY  
GOING TO SING NOTHING

THAT MAKES THAT MUCH SENSE,



DON'T YOU SEE?

YOU ASKED ME WHAT ABOUT  
THE MUSIC. IT WAS TRUTH.

AND, BOY, IF THERE WAS EVER  
A TRUER SONG THAN THAT ONE,

I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS.

"A LONG TIME FORGOTTEN  
WITH DREAMS

"THAT JUST FELL BY THE WAY.

AND THE GOOD LIFE SHE'S LIVING  
AIN'T WHAT SHE'S LIVING TODAY."

AIN'T THAT GREAT?

NARRATOR: "SUDDENLY, WE  
DIDN'T NEED NASHVILLE,"  
JENNINGS RECALLED.

"THEY NEEDED US."

NELSON: OH, WE THRIVED ON IT.

WE THOUGHT IT WAS THE BEST  
THING THAT HAPPENED TO US.

"HEY, THEY'RE CALLING US  
OUTLAWS."

EVERYBODY WHO'S TRIED  
IN THE CREATIVE BUSINESS

HAS TO HAVE A LITTLE OUTLAW  
IN HIM.

SO I THINK THERE'S A LOT OF  
PEOPLE OUT IN THE AUDIENCE

WHO HAVE A LITTLE  
OUTLAW IN THEM, TOO.

SO THEY WERE WILLING TO FORGIVE  
US SOME OF OUR MISGIVINGS,

AS LONG AS  
THE MUSIC WAS GOOD.

â€

NELSON: â€ SOMETIMES I WONDER

â€ WHY I SPEND

â THE LONELY NIGHTS...

NARRATOR: WILLIE NELSON WAS  
BIGGER THAN EVER

AND EVEN MORE STEADFAST  
IN REFUSING

TO BOW TO ANY MUSICAL  
ORTHODOXY.

HE SLIPPED SOME OLD POP  
STANDARDS,

LIKE "STARDUST"  
AND "GEORGIA ON MY MIND,"

INTO HIS LIVE PERFORMANCES  
IN AUSTIN

AND DISCOVERED AN ENTHUSIASTIC  
RESPONSE.

"THE KIDS IN THE CROWD  
THOUGHT 'STARDUST'

WAS A NEW SONG I HAD WRITTEN,"  
HE EXPLAINED.

"THE OLDER FOLKS  
REMEMBERED THE SONG WELL

AND LOVED IT  
AS MUCH AS I DID."

AGAINST HIS LABEL'S OBJECTIONS,

HE RECORDED AN ENTIRE ALBUM OF  
SIMILAR SONGS.

IT STAYED ON THE  
CHARTS FOR 551 WEEKS.

NELSON: â BESIDE  
THE GARDEN WALLS â

â WHEN STARS ARE BRIGHT

â YOU ARE IN MY ARMS

â THE NIGHTINGALE

â TELLS HIS FAIRYTALE

â OF PARADISE WHERE  
ROSES GREW â

WILLIAMS JR.:  
"I WENT DOWN TO THE RIVER

" TO WATCH THE FISH  
SWIM BY... "

NARRATOR: BY THE MID-1970s,

HANK WILLIAMS HAD BEEN DEAD FOR  
NEARLY A QUARTER-CENTURY,

BUT HIS SHADOW  
STILL LOOMED OVER

ANY COUNTRY MUSICIAN DREAMING  
OF SUCCESS.

WILLIAMS JR.:  
"THE DOGGONE RIVER WAS DRY

NARRATOR:  
NO ONE FELT IT MORE KEENLY

THAN HIS ONLY SON,  
HANK WILLIAMS, JR.

JUST 3 1/2 YEARS OLD WHEN  
HIS DAD DIED,

HANK JR. HAD FEW ACTUAL MEMORIES  
OF HIS FAMOUS FATHER

BEYOND LISTENING ON THE RADIO

TO HEAR HIM SAY GOOD  
NIGHT TO BOCEPHUS,

HANK SR.'s AFFECTIONATE NICKNAME  
FOR HIS LITTLE BOY.

BUT AUDREY WILLIAMS WAS  
DETERMINED THAT HE WOULD BE

THE VEHICLE TO KEEP HER FORMER  
HUSBAND'S MEMORY ALIVE,

AND PROVIDE HER A CHANCE TO BE  
IN THE SPOTLIGHT

IN WAYS SHE HADN'T BEEN DURING  
HANK SR.'s SHORT CAREER.

MAN: WHEN I WAS 8 YEARS OLD

AND I WENT OUT AND DID THE VERY  
FIRST SHOW,

I THOUGHT, "OH, MY GOSH."

YOU KNOW, THIS IS  
AN 8-YEAR-OLD BOY

THAT'S THE SON  
OF A GOD-LIKE FIGURE.

SO AN 8-YEAR-OLD  
BOY'S OUT THERE

AND YOU'VE GOT PEOPLE  
THAT ARE CRYING

AND PEOPLE THAT ARE  
LAUGHING,

AND WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

DOES IT SOUND THAT BAD?

IT HAS QUITE AN EFFECT ON  
A LITTLE GUY. YEAH.

â€” ...BLUES

NARRATOR: WILLIAMS MADE HIS  
GRAND OLE OPRY DEBUT AT AGE 11,

SINGING THE SAME SONG HIS  
FATHER HAD AT HIS OWN DEBUT,

"LOVESICK BLUES."

BY THE TIME HANK JR. WAS 14,

HIS MOTHER HAD NEGOTIATED  
A CONTRACT FOR HIM

TO RECORD AN ALBUM  
OF HANK SR.'S SONGS.

â€” I GOT A HOT-ROD FORD  
AND A \$2.00 BILL â€”

â€” I KNOW A SPOT  
RIGHT OVER THE HILL â€”

â€” THERE'S SODA POP  
AND THE DANCING'S FREE â€”

â€” SO IF YOU WANT TO HAVE FUN,  
COME ALONG WITH ME â€”

â€” SAYING, HEY, GOOD LOOKIN'

â WHATCHA GOT COOKIN'?

â HOW'S ABOUT COOKIN'  
SOMETHIN' UP â

â HOW'S ABOUT COOKIN'  
SOMETHIN' UP â

â HOW'S ABOUT COOKIN' SOMETHIN'  
UP WITH ME? â

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]

NARRATOR: TO PROMOTE THE ALBUM,  
AUDREY ARRANGED A TOUR

THAT OPENED IN CANTON, OHIO ON  
NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1964,

THE SAME PLACE HIS FATHER  
WAS HEADED

WHEN HE DIED IN THE  
BACKSEAT OF HIS CAR.

AT A PROMOTION IN NASHVILLE,  
AUDREY BROUGHT THE CAR ITSELF.

HOLLY WILLIAMS: MY DAD WAS  
DEALING WITH HIS DAD'S SHADOW

FROM DAY ONE, NOT ONLY FROM  
FANS AND FRIENDS,

BUT FROM HIS OWN MOM.

SHE WAS RIGHT THERE  
WITH OTHER PEOPLE GOING,

"YOU NEED TO SING YOUR  
DADDY'S SONGS."

YOU KNOW, "YOU NEED TO  
WRITE LIKE YOUR DADDY DID."

IT WAS VERY HARD FOR HIM.

NARRATOR: "LOOSEN UP A BIT,"  
JOHNNY CASH URGED AUDREY.

"LET HIM BE HANK WILLIAMS JR.  
A WHILE."

SHE DIDN'T PAY ANY ATTENTION.

AS SOON AS HE TURNED 18

AND BECAME ENTITLED  
TO HIS INHERITANCE

AND LEGALLY ABLE TO  
MAKE HIS OWN DECISIONS,

WILLIAMS DROPPED HIS MOTHER  
AS HIS MANAGER

AND SET OUT TO MAKE  
HIS OWN WAY IN THE MUSIC WORLD.

WILLIAMS JR.: I SAID,  
"I'M DONE WITH THIS.

I'M DOING MY OWN..."

BECAUSE THERE'S ONE  
SIMPLE REASON.

DADDY DON'T NEED ME  
TO PROMOTE HIM.

HOW DUMB CAN YOU BE?

HE DOES NOT NEED ME TO  
PROMOTE HIM.

WHAT A JOKE.  
THAT'S A JOKE. YEAH.

I SAID, "I THINK I BETTER START  
WRITING MY OWN

AND DOING MY OWN STYLE  
OF STUFF."

HOLLY WILLIAMS: HE TOLD ME  
HIS FIRST FEW SHOWS  
OF HIS OWN MUSIC,

YOU KNOW, HE WOULD, LITERALLY,

HE'S GETTING BOOS  
FROM THE CROWD.

HE SAID 50% OF THEM,  
SOMETIMES 80% WOULD BE GONE.

THERE'D BE A FEW PEOPLE LEFT  
SITTING THERE.

THEY'D THROW  
STUFF AT HIM.

HE'D SAY,  
"IF Y'ALL DON'T MIND,

I'M GOING TO SING A SONG OF MINE  
FOR YOU TONIGHT."

AND JUST GONE. THEY DON'T CARE  
ABOUT IT, YOU KNOW,

WHICH JUST ON A BASIC,

YOU KNOW, HUMAN BEING NICE TO  
PEOPLE LEVEL

IS SO SHOCKING TO ME  
THAT PEOPLE WOULD JUST  
TURN AWAY AND WALK OUT.

BUT THEY  
DIDN'T WANT TO HEAR IT.

THEY WANTED TO HEAR  
"COLD, COLD HEART"

AND "I SAW THE LIGHT,"

AND SO, HE REALLY, REALLY  
STRUGGLED FOR YEARS.

NARRATOR: BY 1974, HE HAD  
ENTERED WHAT HE CALLED

"AN ENDLESS NIGHTMARE OF BARS  
AND SHOWS,

OF JIM BEAM  
AND MULTI-COLORED PILLS."

"I'D NEVER REALIZED  
HOW DEEPLY INGRAINED

MY DADDY'S MYTH  
REALLY WAS," HE RECALLED.

"AT 25 YEARS OLD,  
I WAS MORE LIKE HIM

"THAN I EVER FIGURED I'D BE--

DRUNK, ON DOPE, DIVORCED."

CONVINCED HE WAS ON THE SAME  
TRAJECTORY AS HIS FATHER,

HE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE BY  
SWALLOWING A BOTTLE OF  
PAINKILLERS.

WILLIAMS JR.: â I'M GONNA TAKE

A FREIGHT TRAIN

DOWN AT THE STATION, LORD...

NARRATOR: A DOCTOR ADVISED HIM  
TO LEAVE NASHVILLE

AND RETHINK HIS LIFE

OR HE WOULD CERTAINLY NOT EVEN  
MAKE IT TO 29.

WILLIAMS JR.:  
THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN...

NARRATOR: HE MOVED TO ALABAMA  
AND LIVED IN A SMALL CABIN.

WILLIAMS JR.:  
CAN'T YOU SEE

WOMAN: CAN'T YOU SEE

OH, CAN'T YOU SEE

CAN'T YOU SEE

WHAT THAT WOMAN...

MAN: HANK REACHED A POINT WHERE  
HE SAID, "I AM ME.

"MY NAME IS HANK WILLIAMS,  
BUT I AM ME.

"AND I'VE GOT THINGS THAT I WANT  
TO DO AND I WANT TO SAY,

SO I AM  
GOING TO PURSUE THAT."

AND JUST  
DID A COMPLETE TURN.

HE TOOK QUITE A CHANCE  
WHEN HE DID THAT.

NARRATOR: IN 1975, WILLIAMS  
WENT INTO A STUDIO

IN MUSCLE SHOALS, ALABAMA

TO RECORD A NEW ALBUM, "HANK  
WILLIAMS JR. AND FRIENDS."

HE WAS ATTRACTED TO WHAT WAS  
CALLED SOUTHERN ROCK,



MUSIC BY GROUPS LIKE  
THE ALLMAN BROTHERS,

LYNYRD SKYNYRD, THE MARSHALL  
TUCKER BAND,

AND HIS FRIEND  
CHARLIE DANIELS.

DANIELS: WE WERE COUNTRY,  
BUT NOT WHAT WAS ACCEPTED

BY THE COUNTRY MUSIC  
ESTABLISHMENT AT  
THE TIME, LET'S SAY.

EVERY OTHER MUSIC WAS CHANGING  
AND MOVING AND COOKING.

AND, YOU KNOW, IT WAS TIME FOR  
COUNTRY TO DO THAT, TOO.

NARRATOR: WHEN THE SESSIONS  
ENDED,

WILLIAMS TOOK OFF FOR  
MONTANA

TO RELAX BEFORE RELEASING HIS  
ALBUM AND GOING ON TOUR.

WILLIAMS JR.: "I'M GOING TO  
QUIT SINGING"

"ALL THESE SAD SONGS...

NARRATOR: HE WAS HAPPY WITH  
HIS NEW RECORD,

WHICH INCLUDED  
"LIVING PROOF,"

A SONG THAT MENTIONED  
THE EARLY DEATH OF HIS FATHER

AND LAMENTED, "I DON'T WANT  
TO BE A LEGEND,

I JUST WANT TO BE A MAN."

WILLIAMS JR.: "WHEN I SING  
THEM OLD SONGS OF DADDY'S"

"SEEMS LIKE EVERYONE  
COMES THROUGH"

â LORD, PLEASE HELP ME

â DO I HAVE TO BE

â A LIVING PROOF?

NARRATOR: HIKING ALONG A RIDGE  
NEAR THE IDAHO BORDER,

HE ACCIDENTALLY  
SLIPPED AND TUMBLED

NEARLY 500 FEET DOWN  
THE ROCKY SLOPE.

BY SOME MIRACLE,  
HE SURVIVED,

THOUGH EVERY BONE IN HIS FACE  
HAD BEEN BROKEN,

ONE EYE WAS  
PERMANENTLY DAMAGED,

HIS NOSE WAS TORN OFF,

AND PARTS OF HIS  
BRAIN WERE EXPOSED

THROUGH A DEEP GASH  
IN HIS FOREHEAD.

3 SURGEONS WORKED  
7 1/2 HOURS TRYING

TO PUT HIM BACK TOGETHER.

THE NEWS QUICKLY REACHED  
NASHVILLE AND HIS GODPARENTS,

JOHNNY CASH AND JUNE CARTER,  
WHO RACED TO BE WITH HIM.

JOHN SAT DOWN ON  
THE SIDE OF THE BED...

UH...

IT WAS, UM...

SOMETHING I REALLY NEEDED  
AT THAT TIME.

THERE WASN'T ANY BETTER  
MEDICINE THAN

HAVING HIM THERE WITH ME.

NARRATOR: OVER THE NEXT 16  
MONTHS AND AFTER 9 SURGERIES,

WILLIAMS' FACE WAS  
RECONSTRUCTED.

WHEN HIS ALBUM WAS FINALLY  
RELEASED,

ANOTHER MEMBER OF HIS  
COUNTRY MUSIC FAMILY,

WAYLON JENNINGS, STEPPED IN  
TO HELP HIM PROMOTE IT.

IT WAS A RISK. YOU KNOW, MY DAD  
WASN'T HUGE AT THE TIME.

BUT WAYLON LOOKED AT  
HIM AND BELIEVED IN HIM

AND BELIEVED IN HIS SONGS, NOT  
HIM COVERING HIS DADDY'S SONGS,

AND GAVE HIM HIS--REALLY HIS  
FIRST BREAK IN MUSIC

AND ON THE ROAD.

WILLIAMS JR.: THERE WAS NOBODY,  
NOBODY IN THIS BUSINESS

THAT WAS MORE SPECIAL  
TO ME THAN WAYLON JENNINGS.

HE BELIEVED IN ME.

NARRATOR: WHEN HE MADE IT  
TO AGE 29,

WILLIAMS RELEASED  
"FAMILY TRADITION."

â€ NOW, THESE COUNTRY  
MUSIC SINGERS... â€

NARRATOR: IT BEGAN  
AN UNINTERRUPTED STRING,

THROUGH THE 1980s  
AND EARLY 1990s,

OF 21 GOLD RECORDS.

â€ ...DISOWNED A FEW OTHER  
BOYS AND ME â€

â I GUESS IT'S BECAUSE

â I KIND OF CHANGED  
MY DIRECTION â

â LORD, I GUESS I WENT  
AND BROKE â

â THEIR FAMILY TRADITION

â THEY GET ON ME AND WANT  
TO KNOW, HANK â

â WHY DO YOU DRINK?

â HANK, WHY DO YOU ROLL SMOKE?

â WHY MUST YOU LIVE OUT  
THE SONGS THAT YOU WROTE? â

â OVER AND OVER

â EVERYBODY MADE MY PREDICTION

â SO IF I GET STONED  
AND SING ALL NIGHT LONG â

â IT'S AN OLD FAMILY  
TRADITION... â

HOLLY WILLIAMS: THE WILLIAMS  
FAMILY TRADITION

IS TO FOLLOW  
OUR OWN PASSION.

FIND YOUR OWN WAY. WRITE WHAT  
YOU KNOW AND WHAT INSPIRES YOU.

I'LL NEVER FORGET  
A SECURITY GUARD SAYING,

"YOUR DAD'S SHOWS WERE WILDER  
THAN OUR GUNS 'N' ROSES

AND METALLICA IN THE EIGHTIES,"  
YOU KNOW?

MORE FIGHTS AND DRINKING  
AND WHISKEY,

BUT THEN DAD WOULD  
DO HIS ACOUSTIC SET

AND THAT'S WHEN YOU GO,

"HE DOES HAVE  
HANK'S BLOOD IN HIM."

HE CAN RIP  
YOUR HEART OUT WITH SONGS

LIKE, "OLD HABITS"  
AND "BLUES MAN."

â€œ ...OLD FAMILY TRADITION...

SO HE'S KNOWN FOR  
HIS PARTY SONGS,

BUT HE STILL HAD  
THAT GENE TO JUST, YOU KNOW,

MAKE YOU STOP AND LISTEN AND  
REALLY RELATE TO HIS MUSIC.

â€œ WHY MUST YOU LIVE OUT  
THE SONGS THAT YOU WROTE? â€œ

â€œ IF I'M DOWN IN  
A HONKY-TONK â€œ

â€œ SOME SLICK'S TRYING TO  
GIVE ME SOME FRICTION â€œ

â€œ HOSS, LEAVE ME ALONE,  
I'M SINGING ALL NIGHT LONG â€œ

â€œ IT'S AN OLD WILLIAMS  
TRADITION â€œ

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]

NARRATOR: JOHNNY CASH'S OLDEST  
CHILD, ROSANNE,

HAD BEEN 12  
WHEN HE DIVORCED HER MOTHER.

SHE AND HER LITTLE SISTERS  
SPENT SUMMERS WITH CASH,

BUT GREW UP MOSTLY IN  
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.

WOMAN: I LOVED COUNTRY MUSIC  
WHEN I WAS A LITTLE KID.

BUT THEN AS PRE-TEEN  
AND TEEN,

THAT WAS MY PARENTS' MUSIC.

I DIDN'T CARE,  
I DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW.

AND THEN THE DAY AFTER I  
GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL,

MY DAD CAME TO HIGH  
SCHOOL GRADUATION,

AND HE TOOK ME WITH HIM  
THE NEXT DAY.

AND I WENT ON THE ROAD WITH HIM  
FOR 3 YEARS.

WHEN I LEFT, I THOUGHT,

"I'M JUST GOING TO HANG  
WITH MY DAD

"AND, YOU KNOW, I'LL GO TO  
COLLEGE LATER

"AND THIS IS GOING  
TO BE GREAT, TRAVEL THE WORLD,

STAY IN NICE HOTELS,  
AND SEE DAD PLAY."

AND SO IT WAS THAT,

BUT IT VERY QUICKLY BECAME  
AN EDUCATION.

BOBBY BARE: "I'M 500 MILES  
AWAY FROM HOME"

ROSANNE CASH: WE WERE  
ON THE BUS ONE DAY  
TALKING ABOUT SONGS.

I WAS TALKING TO DAD ABOUT  
WANTING TO BE A SONGWRITER.

AND HE SAID, "WELL,  
DO YOU KNOW THIS SONG?"

AND I SAID, "NO."

AND HE PLAYED IT FOR ME.

AND HE SAID, "DO YOU  
KNOW THIS SONG?"

I SAID, "NEVER  
HEARD THAT ONE EITHER."

AND HE GOT REALLY ALARMED.

AND HE SAT ON THE BUS  
AND MADE THIS LIST.

AND HE WROTE ACROSS THE TOP,  
"100 ESSENTIAL COUNTRY SONGS."

AND HE SAID, "THIS IS  
YOUR EDUCATION."

BARE: "500 MILES  
AWAY FROM HOME"

NARRATOR: ROSANNE, LIKE  
HANK WILLIAMS JR.,

WAS UNSURE ABOUT FOLLOWING IN  
HER FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS.

ROSANNE CASH: I WANTED TO BE  
A SONGWRITER.

AND I WAS JUST TORN  
WITH HOW TO DO THAT

AND NOT BE COMPLETELY ECLIPSED  
BY MY DAD'S SHADOW.

SO I DID A LOT OF THINGS.

I LIVED IN EUROPE  
FOR A WHILE.

I MADE MY FIRST ALBUM  
IN EUROPE.

I THOUGHT, "MAYBE I'LL  
TRY TO DO THIS QUIETLY

AND NO ONE WILL NOTICE  
THAT HE'S MY DAD."

NARRATOR: SHE RETURNED  
TO THE UNITED STATES,

AND IN 1979  
MARRIED RODNEY CROWELL,

WHO BECAME HER PRODUCER.

ROSANNE CASH: "...WORLD  
WE'RE LIVING IN"

"THE RULES AIN'T LIKE  
THEY'VE EVER BEEN"

â SPEAKING OF SPREADING  
IT THIN â

â THAT'S WHAT YOU DO  
WHEN YOU'RE FLASHING YOUR SOUL â

â OH, THAT AIN'T NO WAY...

NARRATOR: THE ALBUMS THEY WOULD  
CREATE REFLECTED HER OWN LIFE

AND EXPERIENCES AS DISTINCTIVELY  
AS HER FATHER'S LIFE

HAD MARKED HIS MUSIC,

INCLUDING A DISPUTE WITH  
HER HUSBAND,

WHICH SHE TURNED INTO HER FIRST  
NUMBER-ONE SONG.

ROSANNE CASH: GOT IN THIS BIG  
FIGHT WITH RODNEY

OUTSIDE A FRENCH RESTAURANT ON  
VENTURA BOULEVARD,

AND I STARTED WRITING WHAT  
WAS A LONG POEM,

AND I DISTILLED IT DOWN TO  
"SEVEN YEAR ACHE."

AND I DIDN'T KNOW IF IT WAS  
A COUNTRY SONG.

I DIDN'T KNOW IF I HAD ACHIEVED  
WHAT I WAS TRYING TO DO.

CROWELL: WHEN I FIRST  
HEARD ROSANNE'S SONG  
"SEVEN YEAR ACHE,"

WELL, I WAS REALLY HAPPY  
WITH IT 'CAUSE SHE WROTE IT

BECAUSE I WAS BEING AN IDIOT,

AND SHE WAS REALLY WRITING  
ABOUT ME,

AND I THOUGHT, "OH, GREAT.

THIS IS A GREAT SONG  
AND IT'S ABOUT ME."



â YOU ACT LIKE YOU WERE  
JUST BORN TONIGHT â

â FACE DOWN IN A MEMORY  
BUT FEELING ALL RIGHT â

â SO WHO DOES YOUR PAST  
BELONG TO TODAY? â

â BABY, YOU DON'T SAY NOTHING  
WHEN YOU'RE FEELING THIS WAY â

â THE GIRLS IN THE BAR THINKING,  
"WHO IS THIS GUY?" â

â BUT THEY DON'T THINK NOTHING  
WHEN THEY'RE TELLING YOU LIES â

â YOU LOOK SO CARELESS...

NARRATOR: THE ALBUM WOULD  
BECOME A GOLD RECORD

AND BE NOMINATED FOR A GRAMMY.

â ...WHEN THEIR POCKETS  
ARE FULL â

â JUST TELL THEM YOU'RE TRYING  
TO CURE A 7-YEAR ACHE... â

NARRATOR: ROSANNE CASH WAS  
25 YEARS OLD.

â BOYS SAY, "WHEN IS HE GONNA  
GIVE US SOME ROOM?" â

â GIRLS SAY, "GOD, I HOPE  
HE COMES BACK SOON"... â

GILL: I HAVE A DAUGHTER  
THAT SINGS,

AND I KNOW HOW HARD IT IS  
FOR HER.

SO IN A SENSE, I PROBABLY HAVE  
SOME GOOD KNOWLEDGE

OF HOW HARD IT WAS FOR ROSANNE  
TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

BUT THE COOL THING WAS THAT SHE  
WAS NOTHING LIKE HER DAD.

THE MUSIC WAS NOTHING  
LIKE HER FATHER'S.

SHE CAME FROM A TOTALLY  
DIFFERENT PLACE,

AND SHE WAS HER OWN ARTIST  
FROM DAY ONE.

NARRATOR: BY THIS TIME,  
JOHNNY CASH HAD MADE

AN ADDITION TO  
HIS MUSICAL FAMILY.

LESTER FLATT HAD DIED,

AND MARTY STUART JOINED  
CASH'S BAND.

IT'S INTERESTING.  
THE FIRST TWO RECORDS  
I EVER OWNED IN MY LIFE

WAS A JOHNNY CASH RECORD

AND A LESTER FLATT  
AND EARL SCRUGGS RECORD.

AND THE ONLY TWO JOBS I'VE  
EVER HAD WAS

WITH LESTER FLATT  
AND JOHNNY CASH.

SO THAT WORKED OUT.

PARTON: "HERE YOU COME AGAIN

" JUST WHEN I'VE BEGUN TO  
GET MYSELF TOGETHER "

" YOU WALTZ RIGHT  
IN THE DOOR "

" JUST LIKE YOU'VE  
DONE BEFORE "

" AND WRAP MY HEART ROUND  
YOUR LITTLE FINGER "

" HERE YOU COME AGAIN...

WOMAN: SHE'S CROSSED ALL  
BOUNDARIES.

DOLLY'S NOT COUNTRY,  
DOLLY'S NOT ROCK,

DOLLY'S NOT POP,  
DOLLY'S EVERYTHING.

AND EVERYBODY FROM  
EVERY GENRE LOVES HER.

PARTON: "ALL YOU GOTTA DO  
IS SMILE THAT SMILE"

"AND THERE GO ALL  
MY DEFENSES..."

LEE: SHE DIDN'T WANT TO BE  
JUST NASHVILLE.

NASHVILLE WAS GREAT TO HER  
AND SHE REVERES IT,

BUT DOLLY  
WANTED TO BE EVERYWHERE.

AND THAT'S WHAT SHE DID.

[CAMERA SHUTTERS CLICKING]

PARTON: "LOOKING BETTER THAN  
A BODY HAS A RIGHT TO"

"AND SHAKING ME UP SO..."

NARRATOR: FRUSTRATED WITH THE  
TRAJECTORY OF HER SOLO CAREER,

DOLLY PARTON HIRED  
A NEW MANAGEMENT TEAM  
IN LOS ANGELES,

AND TRAVELED THERE TO  
RECORD A NEW ALBUM.

"I'M NOT LEAVING COUNTRY  
MUSIC,"

SHE TOLD REPORTERS,  
"I'M TAKING IT WITH ME."

PARTON: "ALL YOU GOTTA DO  
IS SMILE THAT SMILE..."

PARTON: I WAS TRYING TO EXPAND  
MY HORIZONS.

I WANTED MORE.

I JUST FELT LIKE I COULD HAVE  
A BROADER AUDIENCE.

BUT WHEN I FIRST GOT  
L.A. MANAGEMENT,

EVERYBODY SAID I WAS MAKING  
A MISTAKE LEAVING PORTER'S SHOW.

PORTER TOLD ME THAT AS WELL.

EVERYBODY WAS SAYING I WAS  
BETRAYING COUNTRY.

HOW COULD I NOT BE COUNTRY?

I'M A COUNTRY GIRL AT HEART,  
IN MY VOICE,

IN MY FEELINGS,  
IN MY ATTITUDE.

NARRATOR: PARTON'S  
NUMBER-ONE COUNTRY SINGLES

HAD SOLD ABOUT  
60,000 COPIES.

"HERE YOU COME AGAIN,"

HER FIRST CROSSOVER SUCCESS,  
SOLD A MILLION.

THEN THE ALBUM IT CAME FROM DID  
THE SAME AND WENT PLATINUM.

ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY,  
PEOPLE WANTED TO LEARN

ABOUT THE PETITE AND SHAPELY  
BLONDE WITH THE BIG HAIR.

WITH HER  
REFRESHING SENSE OF HUMOR,

ESPECIALLY ABOUT HERSELF, DOLLY  
NEVER DISAPPOINTED THEM.

"IT COSTS A LOT OF MONEY," SHE  
SAID, "TO LOOK THIS CHEAP."

IN NEW YORK, SHE GAVE A FREE  
CONCERT AT CITY HALL PLAZA,

AND MAYOR ED KOCH PRESENTED HER  
WITH THE KEYS TO THE CITY.

LATER, SHE WAS THE GUEST OF  
HONOR AT A PARTY

AT THE FAMOUS STUDIO 54.

"ALTHOUGH I LOOK LIKE  
A DRAG QUEEN'S CHRISTMAS  
TREE ON THE OUTSIDE,"

PARTON SAID, "I AM AT HEART  
A SIMPLE COUNTRY GIRL."

PARTON: THIS IS A COUNTRY  
GIRL'S IDEA OF GLAMOUR.

I WANTED TO HAVE  
BEAUTIFUL CLOTHES.

I WANTED TO, YOU KNOW,  
TO WEAR MAKEUP.

I'D PATTERN MY LOOK AFTER THE  
TOWN TROLLOP IN OUR HOMETOWN

'CAUSE I THOUGHT  
SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL.

NARRATOR: PARTON WAS ALSO  
ONE OF THE SAVVIEST ARTISTS  
IN THE BUSINESS.

SHE HAD HER OWN  
PUBLISHING COMPANY,

MARKETED A SUCCESSFUL LINE  
OF DOLLY DOLLS,

AND NEGOTIATED A 3-YEAR DEAL  
WITH A LAS VEGAS HOTEL

SAID TO BE WORTH FROM  
\$6 MILLION TO \$9 MILLION.

PARTON: I'VE NEVER HAD  
A PROBLEM BEING A WOMAN.

THAT'S WORKED FOR ME MORE THAN  
IT'S WORKED AGAINST ME.

I JUST ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT  
I WAS STRONG

IN MYSELF AND STRONG  
IN MY WORK.

I DO KNOW, AND I HAVE SEEN,  
THAT IT CAN BE A HINDRANCE,  
BUT I WOULD ALWAYS

JUST GO IN JUST SAYING,

"I THINK I'VE GOT SOMETHING  
TO OFFER,

AND I THINK WE CAN BOTH MAKE  
A LOT OF MONEY FROM IT."

AND USUALLY, BY THE TIME  
THE DEAL WAS DONE,

I'D HAVE THE MONEY AND GONE.

HOLLY WILLIAMS: SHE'S MY IDOL  
IN MANY WAYS,

BUT THE FACT THAT SHE IS SUCH  
AN UNBELIEVABLE SONGWRITER

AT THE CORE OF ALL  
THAT SUPERSTARDOM

AND, YOU KNOW, FANCY SHOW STUFF,  
APPEARANCE,

IS PROBABLY THE MOST AMAZING  
THING ABOUT HER TO ME.

NARRATOR: IN 1980,  
SHE ACHIEVED AN ENTIRELY

NEW LEVEL OF  
NATIONAL STARDOM

WHEN SHE JOINED JANE FONDA  
AND LILY TOMLIN

IN THE HIT HOLLYWOOD  
MOVIE "9 TO 5."

LET'S JUST SIT  
DOWN AND--

LOOK, I'VE GOT A GUN  
OUT THERE IN MY PURSE.

AND UP TILL NOW, I'VE  
BEEN FORGIVING AND FORGETTING

BECAUSE OF THE WAY  
I WAS BROUGHT UP,

BUT I'LL TELL YOU ONE THING,

IF YOU EVER SAY  
ANOTHER WORD ABOUT ME

OR MAKE ANOTHER  
INDECENT PROPOSAL,

I'M GONNA GET  
THAT GUN OF MINE,

AND I'M GONNA CHANGE YOU  
FROM A ROOSTER TO A HEN

WITH ONE SHOT.

DON'T THINK  
I CAN'T DO IT.

PARTON: "IT'S ALL TAKING  
AND NO GIVING"

"WE'RE JUST...

NARRATOR: THANKS TO  
HER SONGWRITING TALENT,

HER UNMISTAKABLE VOICE,  
HER BIGGER-THAN-LIFE PERSONA,

AND HER TIRELESS DRIVE,

DOLLY PARTON HAD BECOME THE MOST  
FAMOUS WOMAN IN COUNTRY MUSIC.

"I'M NOT OFFENDED BY ALL  
THE DUMB BLONDE JOKES

BECAUSE I KNOW I'M NOT DUMB,"  
SHE SAID.

"AND I'M NOT BLONDE, EITHER."

PARTON: "PUTTING MONEY  
IN HIS WALLET"

"9 TO 5, WHOA, WHAT A WAY  
TO MAKE A LIVIN'"

NARRATOR:  
COUNTRY MUSIC'S EMBRACE

WAS NOW BIGGER THAN EVER.

ARTISTS WERE EXPLODING  
THE OLD DEFINITIONS

AND EXPLORING EVERY POSSIBLE  
COMBINATION OF STYLES,

AND MANY OF THEM DIDN'T CARE  
WHAT IT WAS CALLED.

ALABAMA: "LIKE GRANDMA  
AND GRANDPA USED TO PLAY..."

NARRATOR: ALABAMA, A COUNTRY  
BAND FORMED BY 3 COUSINS,

EMERGED FROM PLAYING FOR TIPS  
IN ROWDY DANCE HALLS

TO FILLING BIG ARENAS AND  
THRILLING THEIR LEGIONS OF FANS

WITH THEIR ROCK-STYLE  
PRODUCTIONS.

RONNIE MILSAP, A BLIND SINGER  
FROM NORTH CAROLINA,

MIXED COUNTRY AND ROCK, BLUES  
AND SOUL

AND HAD DOZENS OF  
NUMBER-ONE HITS.

THE OAK RIDGE BOYS HAD BEEN  
TRYING FOR YEARS

TO EXPAND THEIR FAN BASE FROM  
THE TINY GOSPEL MARKET.

WITH SONGS LIKE "ELVIRA,"

THEY BECAME ONE OF  
THE TOP-SELLING GROUPS  
IN COUNTRY MUSIC.

BARBARA MANDRELL HAD MASTERED  
THE STEEL GUITAR

BY THE TIME  
SHE WAS 11 YEARS OLD.

BY 13, SHE TOURED  
WITH JOHNNY CASH

AND BACKED UP GEORGE JONES.

NOW SHE RELEASED ALBUMS THAT  
R&B STATIONS PLAYED

AND STARRED IN  
HER OWN NETWORK VARIETY SHOW.

KENNY ROGERS HAD PLAYED FOLK  
AND ROCK MUSIC



AND SANG COUNTRY-POP BALLADS  
LIKE "THE GAMBLER,"

A SONG SO POPULAR  
4 MADE-FOR-TELEVISION  
MOVIES WERE BASED ON IT.

BETWEEN 1973 AND 1983,  
THE NUMBER OF FULL-TIME

COUNTRY RADIO STATIONS  
WOULD NEARLY TRIPLE,

RISING FROM 764 TO 2,266.

GOLD ALBUMS, ONCE A RARITY,

WERE NOW BEING ANNOUNCED NEARLY  
TWICE A MONTH.

JONES: "THERE ARE THOSE WHO'D  
LIKE TO CHANGE

THE WAY I'M LIVING...

HARRIS: I THINK I WAS SWEEPING  
THE FLOOR OR SOMETHING,

AND I HAD A GEORGE JONES  
RECORD ON,

AND ALL OF A SUDDEN,  
I HEARD HIM.

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO  
EXPLAIN IT.

BUT IT WAS LIKE A  
VEIL LIFTED FROM MY EARS,

ATTACHED TO MY SOUL  
AND MY HEART

AND THE WAY I LISTENED  
TO MUSIC.

I HEARD HIM, TRULY HEARD HIM,  
FOR THE FIRST TIME,

THE SOULFULNESS IN HIS VOICE.

AND IT WAS JUST THIS INCREDIBLE  
"AHA" MOMENT

WHERE I THOUGHT, "THERE'S JUST  
NO ONE LIKE HIM."

JONES: "I'VE DONE EVERYTHING  
I CAN

" TO MAKE YOU HAPPY...

SHERRILL: I DON'T THINK YOU CAN  
UNDERSTAND GEORGE JONES.

I DON'T THINK THERE'S A WAY,  
A WAY ON GOD'S GREEN EARTH TO  
UNDERSTAND GEORGE JONES.

I...

I QUIT TRYING  
A LONG TIME AGO.

JONES: "...ARMS MAY ACHE  
AND WANT TO HOLD YOU..."

NARRATOR: IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING  
HIS DIVORCE FROM TAMMY WYNETTE,

GEORGE JONES' LIFE SPIRALED  
OUT OF CONTROL.

JONES: "...DON'T  
GIVE A DAMN

NARRATOR: ALREADY PRONE TO  
VIOLENT BOUTS OF HEAVY DRINKING,

HE NOW BECAME ADDICTED  
TO COCAINE.

HE CONTINUED TO RECORD,

AND NO ONE DISPUTED THE SINGULAR  
POWER OF HIS VOICE.

BUT JONES SEEMED  
INTENT ON SELF-DESTRUCTION.

HE BEGAN MISSING CONCERTS,

SO MANY THAT PROMOTERS AND FANS  
ALIKE GAVE HIM A NEW NICKNAME.

IT HAD BEEN "POSSUM."

NOW IT WAS "NO SHOW JONES."

THE MIXTURE OF WHISKEY  
AND COCAINE

MADE HIM CHRONICALLY

SLEEPLESS AND PARANOID.

HE LOST WEIGHT, DROPPING TO  
UNDER 100 POUNDS.

HE HAD REPEATED RUN-INS WITH  
THE POLICE FOR SPEEDING AROUND

IN ONE OF HIS CADILLACS  
WHILE DRUNK.

JONES: "I MIGHT WAKE...

NARRATOR: ENTANGLED  
IN LAWSUITS

FOR BAD DEBTS  
AND CANCELLED SHOWS,

HE FILED FOR BANKRUPTCY,  
LOST HIS HOUSE,

AND LIVED IN HIS CAR FOR  
A WHILE.

JONES: "I JUST DON'T  
GIVE A DAMN "

NARRATOR: TAMMY WYNETTE'S LIFE  
WAS IN SHAMBLES, TOO.

NOW MARRIED TO  
HER FIFTH HUSBAND

AND PLAGUED  
BY HEALTH PROBLEMS,

SHE HAD BECOME HOOKED ON  
PRESCRIPTION PAINKILLERS,

AND THEN INVOLVED IN A STRING OF  
BIZARRE INCIDENTS,

INCLUDING A SENSATIONAL CLAIM  
THAT SHE HAD BEEN KIDNAPPED

AND BEATEN UP  
BEFORE BEING RELEASED

WYNETTE HADN'T HAD A NUMBER-ONE  
HIT FOR 4 YEARS,

AND NEITHER  
HAD GEORGE JONES,

WHEN BILLY SHERRILL BROUGHT  
THE TWO OF THEM BACK

INTO THE STUDIO IN  
JANUARY 1980

FOR ANOTHER ALBUM OF DUETS,  
"TOGETHER AGAIN."

JONES: "WE ALWAYS WANTED  
A BIG TWO-STORY HOUSE..."

SHERRILL: IT WAS KIND OF LIKE  
TWO WOUNDED ANIMALS.

NOT TOO WOUNDED TO KEEP  
DOING WHAT THEY WANTED TO DO

AND WHAT THEY LOVED DOING.

NARRATOR: A SINGLE FROM THE  
ALBUM, "TWO STORY HOUSE,"

WHICH WYNETTE HAD CO-WRITTEN  
ESPECIALLY FOR THE OCCASION,

WOULD RISE TO NUMBER TWO  
ON THE COUNTRY CHARTS IN  
THE SPRING OF 1980.

BUT ITS SUCCESS PALED COMPARED  
TO A SONG JONES RECORDED

BY HIMSELF LESS THAN  
A MONTH LATER.

THE EPITOME OF A COUNTRY SONG?

PROBABLY "HE STOPPED  
LOVING HER TODAY."

IT'S JUST A LOVE STORY.

IT'S SAD.

IT'S A WONDERFUL MELODY.

IT'S PROBABLY ONE OF THE MOST  
WELL-WRITTEN SONGS EVER.

NARRATOR: "HE STOPPED LOVING  
HER TODAY"

WAS WRITTEN BY BOBBY BRADDOCK  
AND CURLY PUTMAN.

IT DESCRIBES A MAN WHO WAITS  
ALL HIS LIFE,

PINING AWAY FOR  
THE WOMAN WHO'S LEFT HIM.

MIDWAY THROUGH THE SONG, IT'S  
REVEALED THAT THE ONLY REASON

HE STOPPED LOVING HER IS  
BECAUSE HE HAS DIED.

BILLY SHERRILL BELIEVED  
THE SONG WAS A PERFECT  
FIT FOR GEORGE JONES.

THE ONLY PROBLEM WAS JONES KEPT  
CONFUSING THE MELODY

WITH KRIS KRISTOFFERSON'S "HELP  
ME MAKE IT THROUGH THE NIGHT."

SHERRILL: HE WAS GOING, "HE  
SAID I'LL LOVE YOU TILL I DIE"

I SAID, "THAT'S 'HELP ME MAKE  
IT THROUGH THE NIGHT,' FOOL."

FINALLY, HE SAID...  
HE GOT MAD AND SAID,

"HE SAID, 'I'LL LOVE  
YOU TILL I DIE' "

IS THAT GOOD ENOUGH?"  
I SAID, "THAT'S FINE."

JONES: "HE SAID, 'I'LL LOVE YOU  
TILL I DIE' "

SHE TOLD HIM, "YOU'LL  
FORGET IN TIME" "

AS THE YEARS WENT  
SLOWLY BY "

SHE STILL PREYED UPON  
HIS MIND "

HE KEPT HER PICTURE  
ON HIS WALL "

WENT HALF CRAZY  
NOW AND THEN "

HE STILL LOVED HER  
THROUGH IT ALL "

HOPING SHE'D COME BACK  
AGAIN... "

NARRATOR: WITH SOME  
OF NASHVILLE'S BEST  
SESSION MUSICIANS,

SHERRILL CREATED  
AN ARRANGEMENT

THAT HAD A CLASSIC  
COUNTRYPOLITAN SOUND--

A FAINT, WEEPING STEEL GUITAR  
WITHOUT A HINT OF TWANG,

SWEET BACKGROUND VOCALS,

AND AN ENSEMBLE OF STRINGS THAT  
BUILT STEADILY

TOWARD THE SONG'S CLIMAX.

BRADDOCK: THIS MAY SOUND STRANGE  
COMING FROM THE SONGWRITER,

BUT I THINK THAT ROOM FULL OF  
CELLOS AND VIOLAS

AND VIOLINS  
ASCENDING ON THAT RECORD,

SOUNDING LIKE THE MAN'S  
SOUL GOING UP TO HEAVEN,

I THOUGHT THAT WAS THE MOST  
POWERFUL THING ON THE RECORD.

SHERRILL: WORD FOR WORD,

AFTER I PLAYED HIM  
THE FINISHED PRODUCT,

SO HELP ME GOD, JONES SAID,

"YOU'VE GOT YOUR RECORD,  
BUT LISTEN, SON,

NOBODY WILL EVER BUY THAT MORBID  
SON OF A BITCH."

JONES: "HE STOPPED LOVING  
HER TODAY"

"THEY PLACED A WREATH  
UPON HIS DOOR..."

I AM CONVINCED GEORGE JONES  
MIGHT BE THE MOST SOULFUL SINGER

THE PLANET HAS EVER KNOWN.

JONES: " ...HIM AWAY

" HE STOPPED LOVING  
HER TODAY... "

NARRATOR: 3 MONTHS AFTER  
ITS RELEASE,

"HE STOPPED LOVING HER TODAY"

REACHED THE TOP OF THE COUNTRY  
CHARTS,

GEORGE JONES' FIRST SOLO  
NUMBER-ONE HIT IN 6 YEARS.

IT WOULD GO ON TO SELL  
A MILLION RECORDS

AND WIN EVERY POSSIBLE AWARD FOR  
THE SONGWRITERS AND THE ARTIST.

IT'S ONE OF THOSE SONGS  
THAT WAS MEANT TO BE.

AND IT WAS ONE OF THOSE SONGS

THAT GEORGE JONES WAS MEANT  
TO RECORD.

AND WHEN HE GOT DONE WITH IT,  
IT HAD BEEN DONE.

JONES: " ...HER TODAY...

SMITH: THE FIRST TIME I HEARD  
IT, I WAS DRIVING OUT 65.

I HAD TO PULL OFF THE ROAD.

I COULDN'T SEE  
I WAS CRYING SO HARD.

THAT SONG JUST REALLY  
TOUCHED ME,

AND I HONESTLY  
THINK IT MAY HAVE HAPPENED.

[LAUGHS]

JONES: " HE STOPPED LOVING  
HER TODAY "

EMERY: I ASKED MERLE  
ONE TIME WHO HIS FAVORITE  
COUNTRY SINGER WAS.

HE SAID, "GEORGE JONES."

I ASKED GEORGE WHO HIS FAVORITE  
COUNTRY SINGER WAS,

HE SAID, "MERLE HAGGARD."

[LAUGHS]

NARRATOR: BY THE EARLY 1980s,

MERLE HAGGARD,  
ALREADY CONSIDERED  
ONE OF COUNTRY MUSIC'S

GREATEST SINGER-SONGWRITERS, HAD  
RECORDED MORE THAN 40 ALBUMS

AND HAD MORE THAN 30  
NUMBER-ONE SINGLES.

IN 1983, HE BEGAN WORK ON  
AN ALBUM WITH WILLIE NELSON.

THEY HAD BEEN RECORDING  
FOR 5 DAYS AT NELSON'S  
STUDIO IN TEXAS,

BUT STILL HADN'T FOUND THE RIGHT  
SONG TO ANCHOR THE ALBUM.

HAGGARD HAD GONE TO  
SLEEP ON HIS BUS.

MEANWHILE, WILLIE'S DAUGHTER  
PLAYED HER FATHER

A TUNE HE HAD NEVER  
HEARD BEFORE.

IT WAS ON AN  
EMMYLOU HARRIS ALBUM,

A BALLAD WRITTEN BY  
TOWNES VAN ZANDT.

AND WILLIE CAME AND KNOCKED ON  
MY BUS LATE ONE NIGHT,

ABOUT 4:00 IN THE MORNING,  
ACTUALLY,

AND I HAD JUST LAID DOWN.



AND HE SAID, "I THINK I'VE FOUND  
A TITLE FOR OUR ALBUM."

AND HE HAD A PAPER SACK  
ROLLED OUT

AND THESE WORDS WERE  
THAT LONG.

AND, LIKE I SAID, I HAD JUST GOT  
TO BED AND I SAID, "WILLIE,"

I SAID, "I CAN'T EVEN  
SEE THOSE LYRICS."

I SAID, "YOU GUYS GO AHEAD  
AND PUT IT DOWN,

AND I'LL PUT MY VOICE ON  
IN THE MORNING."

"NO," HE SAID. "GET UP  
AND COME IN THERE WITH ME."

AND SAID, "LET'S DO IT ALL  
AT ONCE."

SO I WENT IN THERE.

I WAS REAL SLEEPY, AND WE  
RECORDED THAT THING.

AND I WAS THINKING  
WHILE I WAS DOING IT,

"WELL, I'LL DO THIS OVER IN  
THE MORNING," YOU KNOW?

SO I GOT UP THE NEXT MORNING  
AND WENT IN THE STUDIO,

AND I SAID, "CAN I DO THAT VOCAL  
TRACK OVER?"

AND THEY SAID, "HELL, IT'S ON  
THE WAY TO NEW YORK."

NELSON: "I'M LIVING ON THE ROAD,  
MY FRIEND I'M"

"I WAS GONNA KEEP YOU FREE  
AND CLEAN... I'M"

NARRATOR: THE SONG WAS  
"PANCHO AND LEFTY."

THE ALBUM WOULD SHOOT TO NUMBER  
ONE ON THE COUNTRY CHARTS,

CROSS OVER TO POP,

AND SELL MORE  
THAN A MILLION RECORDS.

NELSON: "â€¦HER FAVORITE  
ONE IT SEEMS..."

NARRATOR: TO GET THERE,  
THE SONG HAD TRAVELED

A LONG, MEANDERING ROAD.

TWO OF COUNTRY MUSIC'S  
LEGENDARY SONGWRITERS,

THE MUSICAL OUTLAW  
FROM TEXAS

AND THE POET OF THE COMMON MAN

FROM THE HARDCRABBLE STREETS  
OF BAKERSFIELD,

HAD LISTENED TO AN ALBUM  
RECORDED

BY A FORMER HIPPIE FOLK  
SINGER

WHO HAD BEEN CONVERTED  
TO COUNTRY MUSIC  
BY A COSMIC COWBOY

AND IN DOING SO STUMBLED  
UPON A SONG

WRITTEN BY AN ECCENTRIC  
VAGABOND

WHO SPENT HIS DAYS TRYING TO  
WRITE THE PERFECT SONG

AND SOME OF HIS NIGHTS  
CRASHING WITH FRIENDS

AT A HOME WHERE THE FOCUS WAS ON  
ART, NOT COMMERCIAL SUCCESS.

AND ON HIS 60th BIRTHDAY,

WILLIE NELSON WOULD SING  
"PANCHO AND LEFTY" AGAIN,

THIS TIME WITH SOMEONE ELSE

WHO ALSO DEFIED MUSICAL  
CATEGORIES--BOB DYLAN.

NELSON: "OUT OF KINDNESS,  
I SUPPOSE..."

NARRATOR: BACKING THEM UP  
ON THE MANDOLIN

WAS THE KID FROM  
PHILADELPHIA, MISSISSIPPI

WHO HAD PLAYED  
IN LESTER FLATT'S

AND JOHNNY CASH'S BAND--  
MARTY STUART.

NELSON: "...DOWN SOUTH

" ENDED UP IN LEFTY'S MOUTH

MUSIC CUTS THROUGH ALL  
THE BOUNDARIES,

AND A LOT OF US KNOW THAT.

SO WE'RE NOT AFRAID TO  
PLAY ANYTHING FOR ANYBODY,

BECAUSE MUSIC WILL  
GET THROUGH.

" THERE AIN'T NOBODY KNOWS

" ALL THE FEDERALES SAY

" THEY COULD HAVE HAD HIM  
ANY DAY "

" THEY ONLY LET HIM  
GO SO LONG "

" OUT OF KINDNESS,  
I SUPPOSE "

["JOLENE" PLAYING]

["JOLENE" PLAYING]

PARTON: " JOLENE, JOLENE,  
JOLENE, JOLENE "

" I'M BEGGING OF YOU, PLEASE  
DON'T TAKE MY MAN "

â JOLENE, JOLENE,  
JOLENE, JOLENE â

â PLEASE DON'T TAKE HIM  
JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN â

â YOUR BEAUTY IS  
BEYOND COMPARE â

â WITH FLAMING LOCKS  
OF AUBURN HAIR â

â WITH IVORY SKIN AND EYES  
OF EMERALD GREEN â

â YOUR SMILE IS LIKE  
A BREATH OF SPRING â

â YOUR VOICE IS SOFT  
LIKE SUMMER RAIN â

â AND I CANNOT COMPETE  
WITH YOU, JOLENE â

NARRATOR: NEXT TIME  
ON "COUNTRY MUSIC,"

GARTH BROOKS FILLS ARENAS...

KATHY MATTEA: THIS GUY IS  
SELLING OUT THE STADIUMS,  
AND HE'S ONE OF US.

NARRATOR: COUNTRY REDISCOVERS  
ITS ROOTS...

VINCE GILL: I DON'T THINK I  
WOULD ENJOY COUNTRY MUSIC  
IF IT STAYED THE SAME.

NARRATOR: AND SAYS FAREWELL  
TO JOHNNY CASH.

EVERY PIECE OF AMERICAN MUSIC--

GOSPEL, BLUEGRASS,

ROCK AND ROLL--  
THAT WAS ALL IN JOHN.

NARRATOR: DON'T MISS THE FINALE  
OF "COUNTRY MUSIC."

JOHNNY CASH:  
â ...COLD, WILD WIND WILL COME

TO EXPERIENCE MORE  
OF COUNTRY MUSIC,

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ON AMAZON PRIME VIDEO.

â JOLENE, JOLENE,  
JOLENE, JOLENE â

â PLEASE DON'T TAKE HIM  
JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN â

â YOU COULD HAVE YOUR  
CHOICE OF MEN â

â BUT I COULD NEVER  
LOVE AGAIN â

â HE'S THE ONLY ONE FOR ME

â JOLENE

â I HAD TO HAVE  
THIS TALK WITH YOU â

â MY HAPPINESS DEPENDS ON YOU

â AND WHATEVER YOU DECIDE  
TO DO â

â JOLENE

â JOLENE, JOLENE,  
JOLENE, JOLENE â

â I'M BEGGING OF YOU, PLEASE  
DON'T TAKE MY MAN â

â JOLENE, JOLENE,  
JOLENE, JOLENE â

â PLEASE DON'T TAKE HIM  
JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN â

â JOLENE, JOLENE,  
JOLENE, JOLENE â

â I'M BEGGING OF YOU, PLEASE  
DON'T TAKE MY MAN â

â JOLENE, JOLENE,  
JOLENE, JOLENE â

â PLEASE DON'T TAKE HIM  
EVEN THOUGH YOU CAN â

â JOLENE

CHORUS: â JOLENE